

Start saving energy, \$, in the kitchen

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

LEBANON — With the cost of energy going ever higher, it makes sense to try to conserve wherever possible, including in the kitchen. Although Letie Schadler, Lebanon County Extension home economist, points out that the energy saved in the kitchen is not likely to be dramatic, it will slowly add up and make an impact on the total bill.

Letie points out, "The amount of money in the total electric bill used for cooking is relatively small. To make changes in how much we are spending we will have to change techniques, and the amount of money you save will be relative to the amount you are now spending."

A look at baking four potatoes in various kitchen appliances gives a good idea of how much energy is consumed by each, and shows clearly which is the most energy efficient.

A microwave countertop oven stands out as the most efficient unit, using just .16 KWH to bake the four potatoes. A conventional electric oven is the least energy efficient, taking 1.36 KWH to do the job. A single element toaster oven is next best in efficiency, using .26 KWH, followed by a pressure cooker on an electric range at .34 KWH. An electric skillet takes .54 KWH and a convection countertop electric oven uses .64 KWH.

Despite what may seem obvious, Letie cautions that purchasing a microwave oven to save energy may not be the best answer for

your home. She said homemakers must consider the "payback rate" on the initial investment in an appliance like a microwave. It will take years to make up the savings on the electric bill for the price of a several hundred dollar microwave.

Other considerations before purchasing a new appliance with the idea of saving energy include how much time you have to spend using the appliance, its speed, its portability, its capacity and new learning required to use it.

She cautioned homemakers to have the answers to some basic question well thought out before they begin shopping for a new appliance.

Letie pointed out, "A toaster oven for a one or two person household definitely makes sense." She noted that a toaster oven, which requires a modest investment will pay back that investment fairly quickly.

Letie said that the reason it is expensive to heat a conventional oven is the time it takes to heat the oven walls and racks, adding, "It is really inefficient to heat up an oven for short term cooking." However, she said a real savings can accrue by using the oven for complete meals, including meat, vegetables and dessert. She made it clear that there will be no mingling of flavors when totally different items are put in an oven together.

A self-cleaning oven will always save money on electricity over a conventional oven because it has extremely good insulation to allow

it safely to be heated up to the intense heat of the cleaning cycle.

In a microwave, she said, the oven is not being heated up. The molecules of food are being heated up directly, without the oven walls and the air also being heated. A disadvantage of the microwave is that it requires a lot of time and attention to do a sequential meal.

"A microwave can save money, but it can also cost more," Letie states. "It requires management, and it will save money but only if you are using it for what it does well. If you use a microwave and a conventional oven plus two burners for a meal, it is not saving you money."

Because several companies are now scaling down the size of their microwave ovens, Letie pointed out that the price of the initial investment can be reduced by getting a smaller sized oven.

Convection ovens take less energy than conventional electric ovens because they operate with forced moving air which makes food cook faster and uses less energy to accomplish the job. It saves time and energy only with uncovered foods. An advantage of the convection oven is that it uses regular utensils.

There are no cookbooks available yet to help the homemaker take advantage of the convection oven, or to show how to use it most effectively in the microwave convection combination which is on the market. Experimentation will be needed to use this oven to its best advantage.

An appliance which can be a real



The electric frying pan, almost a must in any kitchen, can be used more frequently to save energy on jobs which may have been done in a conventional oven. This appliance can be a real energy saver.

energy saver in the kitchen is the electric fry pan. Letie said, "It is a very efficient piece of equipment because it has a thermostatic control that allows you to regulate the temperature. It is more efficient and effective to use the frying pan than the countertop."

Letie told homemakers to consider using the frying pan for things that may be unusual, including making popcorn and baking cakes. She said cakes can be baked either by pouring the batter directly into the pan, or by putting a conventional cake pan on a rack in the frying pan. Potatoes can be baked easily in the frying pan simply by putting them on crumpled aluminum foil.

Pressure cooker, though Letie says they have gone "out of fashion," are also energy savers in the kitchen.

She called blue agate roast pans "the unsung heroes of the kitchen," and said they can be used

for roasts, without browning the meat first or dredging with flour. Just put the meat in the enamel pan, add a small amount of water and bake at 350 degrees for one hour per pound. "You get lots of drippings and marvelous gravy," Letie says.

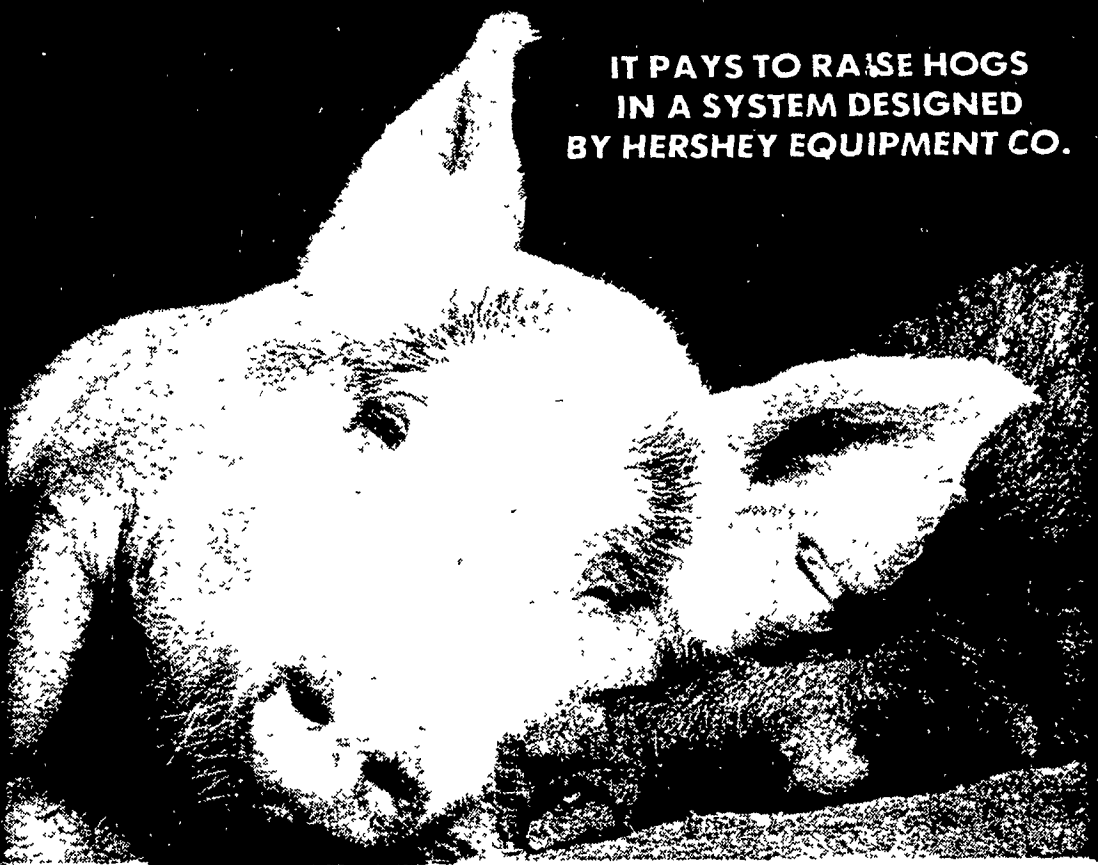
Other good investment for the energy conscious includes thermos equipment to keep coffee, hot throughout the day and for keeping cold drinks available in the summer without opening the refrigerator door repeatedly.

Letie concluded that the most important thing for homemakers to do in the kitchen is "to think creatively." She suggested they take a look at a meal and ask themselves how else they could have done it and saved more energy.

The overall savings may not be large, but with the cost of electricity moving ever higher, even a modest savings will be welcome.

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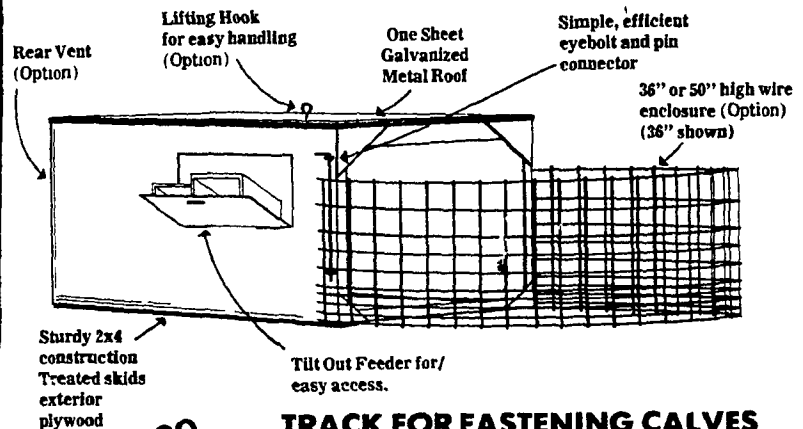
HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania Junior Angus Association met recently to elect officers.

Elected were: president, Diane Krause; vice president and show secretary, Tammy Eisenhour; secretary-treasurer, Chris Shive; reporter Julie Myers; directors,

Kaye Sweigard, Bill Wise, Don Cairns, and Diane Keen; and advisor, Gail Dennis.

Diane Krause was nominated as the Pennsylvania candidate to the National Junior Angus Board next year in Wisconsin.

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