

Selecting The Toaster Oven That's Right For You

What is it about the toaster oven that fires the imagination and makes the soul take wing? Is it the intellectual thrill of witnessing the perfect meld of pure science and practical engineering at work?

Or is it the aesthetic satisfaction in the interplay between the sleek angles of the machine and the soft, yielding curve of foodstuffs that moves us so? Perhaps it's nothing more than the sheer joy of baking things in an oven, only smaller. I cannot say; the answer is in your heart. Or maybe in the oven's instruction manual (this frankly seems more plausible).

What I do know is that there are many different kinds of toaster oven. If you simply waltz into the house-wares section and demand a toaster oven you're very likely to get the wrong kind. In fact it's possible you may not get a toaster oven at all. Some places don't like demanding customers, especially waltzing ones. The point is if you're buying a toaster oven for the 1st time you need to know what kind of toaster oven is best for you.

- Convection Ovens: The basic principle behind the operation of these ovens is that the heat flows from the heating element through the air to the food. The convection fan circulates the heated air, allowing for slower, more even cooking than direct heat methods like flames or microwaves. A Quartz heating element is the best type, and sounds extremely impressive when you say it out loud.

- Combination Toaster Oven: Or a Combination Toaster/Toaster Oven. This is nothing more than a toaster oven (simply a small oven capable, among other things, of toasting bread) with a built in, and some might suggest, superfluous slot toaster on the side.

- Combination Microwave/Toaster Ovens: These combine the convenience and speed of a microwave with the cooking options of a toaster oven. Most importantly its two-in-one design makes it a space-saver, leaving room on your counter-tops for other things (minds out of the gutter, people!), like blenders, juicers and bread-makers. One option is to use the extra space for a second microwave toaster oven in an ostentatious display of wealth that will impress your friends and strike fear into the hearts of your enemies.

- Rotisserie Toaster Ovens: The cavemen did their part in inventing the rotisserie roasting method, and 150,000 years later (to the day! (okay, not really)) the toaster oven came along and finished the job. This process allows for even cooking, a crisp crust or skin and allows meat to basted in its own juices. Rotisserie accessories are usually removable. A capacious oven is a must.

- Infrared Toaster Ovens: It isn't as 'tech as it sounds. Infrared is simply the part of the electromagnetic spectrum between light visible to the human eye and microwaves. The infrared radiation actually pushes moisture into food rather, increasing the flavor. Infrared toaster ovens are fast, versatile, efficient and can detect ghosts. All right, I made that last bit up, but don't look so disappointed. How often do ghosts try to mess with your pizza bagels anyway?

About the Author

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