

Save money as you cook

A smart cook can prepare meals without wasting a lot of energy. Whether you're stove top cooking or using the oven, there are a few ways to conserve, says Monica Beaumont, foods and nutrition specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's rural organizations and services branch.

The best cookware for the stove top is made of heavy metal with flat bottoms, straight sides and tight fitting lids. Pressure cookers are even better than standard saucepans, she says. They can save as much as 40 per cent more energy than conventional cookware.

"It's a good idea to match the size of the saucepan to the element you're using," she says. Energy can be wasted if the pot extends more than 2.5 centimetres (one inch) beyond the heated area.

If you're cooking with water, reduce the heat once it comes to a boil. Continued high temperatures will not cook the food any faster.

Another way to save energy is to shorten the cooking time by a few minutes. "Many people don't realize that food will continue to cook with stored heat," she says.

The oven can also be a big energy consumer. "Avoid using it whenever possible," says Beaumont. Only 10 per cent of the energy used to heat the oven actually cooks the food, the rest is wasted.

She suggests that preheating the oven is unnecessary unless the broiler element comes on during the preheat cycle. Cooking times will remain the same even for foods baked a short period of time. Foods with longer baking time will require no longer than five minutes more without preheating.

One common mistake is to set the heat controls higher than required. It won't heat the oven any faster.

"A good way to save energy is to use your whole oven space and cook several items at once," she says. This method only takes a little more energy and is more efficient than cooking several items separately.

Keeping the oven door closed is also a good practice. Oven temperatures can drop anywhere from four degrees Celsius to 24 degrees Celsius (about seven degrees

Fahrenheit to 43 degrees Fahrenheit) every time the door is opened.

As with stove top cooking, bakeware makes all the difference. Beaumont suggests using glass or dark-colored metal bakeware that will absorb and retain the heat.

Plan your meals using these tips and you'll not only save energy, you'll save money on your utility bills, she says.

Check Energuide labels on new appliances

"EnerGuide" labels on most new household appliances tell consumers the amount of electricity the appliance consumes each month, says Maxine Innes-Holbrough, the home and family management specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's rural organizations and services branch. This label helps consumers calculate how much the appliance costs to operate.

The federal government requires all new household tumble-type clothes dryers, ranges, clothes washers, dishwashers, refrigerators and freezers to display the "EnerGuide" label.

Each model is tested and given a label in accordance with methods approved by a Canadian Standards Association (CSA) steering committee and verified by CSA.

The "EnerGuide" label states the kilowatt hours per month (kWh/month) energy consumption of each model.

This rating shows how much power is needed to operate the appliance.

The following formula is used to

calculate the total energy cost of the model over a 10 year period: total cost of electricity = kWh per month x cents per kWh x 12 months x 10 years divided by 100.

For example, if the cost per kWh is four cents, then the total cost of electricity is: 123 x 4 x 12 x 10 divided by 100 or \$590.40 for 10 years.

If the label has 175 kWh, instead of 123 kWh, then the cost would be \$840 to operate the appliance for 10 years.

Both examples assume the cost of electrical energy remains constant over the 10 year period.

The appliance using 123 kWh per month costs \$249.60 less in 10 years than the appliance which consumes 175 kWh per month.

This example demonstrates the potential for substantial dollar savings for you and energy savings for Canada.

When selecting your appliance, energy consumption comparison is not your only consideration; however, low energy-consuming appliances could save you money and energy.