

Better Business Bureau tells you what to look out for

# Thinking of getting a microwave?

**Herald Special**  
For and against, there are a raft of opinions about microwave ovens, microwave-convection ovens and microwave cooking in general. While most people agree that nothing beats the microwave oven for speedy and efficient cooking, according to Paul Tuz, president of the Better Business Bureau, "buyers should be looking at microwave equipment as a supplement to regular cooking appliances".

Viewed simply, microwave ovens cook fast, while microwave-convection ovens cook at about the same rate of speed but brown and crisp food in the bargain. Of course you will pay for the "bargain" and cooking experts still maintain that the microwaves won't replace the old-fashioned range oven and all of its cooking tricks.

Microwaves, Mr. Tuz points out, are a cooking accessory - as an electric fry pan would be to a range-top burner. However, most microwave outfits cost as much as a conventional oven, which takes this equipment out of "accessory appliances" pricing. Think through a microwave oven purchase and see where the units fit into your lifestyle. Three good buying reasons include these:

- fast preparation of foods. Conventional food preparation in a microwave can take anywhere from one-half to three-quarters as long as the old-fashioned oven-cook-top method.
- heat-up of pre-cooked meals and leftovers.
- less cooking clean-up.

Essentials and Glim-cracks: The control panels of some microwaves are intimidating because they appear to be very complicated, but learning how to turn the right dial or push the right button at the right time is not as difficult as it might first appear. Microwave manufacturers package excellent how-to books with their equipment and some of them even offer free cooking lessons via retailers.

Keep in mind, too, that many of the fancy controls and other gimmicks are not essential to good microwave cooking; many ovens will do an excellent job without them. This saves you money and the time learning new cooking tricks.

"A little research on your part can help you make a better buying decision", says Mr. Tuz. You can obtain copies of microwave instruction and cook-books which will help you

learn the variety of foods and time spans microwave cooking takes.

When shopping, also keep in mind kitchen space limitations. For example, a countertop microwave needs space beneath wall cabinets and air space behind the unit for air circulation. Some models have doors that are hinged at the side;

others are hinged at the bottom. You will have to determine which fits your kitchen situation best. You may need a separate power circuit to run the oven.

Oven size may be a consideration since there are many different sizes from which to choose. The dimensions are figured in cubic inches. And you

probably will need special cooking utensils for cooking. Are these included in the microwave package or will you have to buy them separately?

Other features include timing mechanisms that are easy to read, easy to set, and calibrated in seconds and minutes. Food defrosting features may be a buying point

along with food browning features that the oven or utensils provide.

Safety and Energy: Mr. Tuz advises that all electrical appliances including microwave ovens sold in Ontario must meet established federal standards for radiation leakage adopted by the Canadian Standards Association. Any unit you buy should be

C.S.A. approved.

Microwave ovens do not necessarily save energy, and it is doubtful if you could gain enough savings from your electric bill to offset the cost of any microwave unit. Combination ovens may even pull more power than a conventional oven unit.

An equipment warranty is important, and make

sure you get one and check it before you buy. Most ovens have warranty coverage from one to seven years. Determine the coverage and parts and labour and the magnetron tube. Also note any restrictions on the use of the oven which might void the warranty. All that's left to do is to cook up a storm!

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## VERSATILE LEISURE HOME DESIGN OFFERS PASSIVE SOLAR HEATING

This smartly-styled contemporary leisure home plan is ideally suited to the medium frontage building site, and it provides in excess of 1,500 square feet of scientifically up-to-date finished floor area in a split level format. An un-finished loft area over the bedrooms provides a further 330 square feet of floor space which is available for future development; so that the fully-finished home will total nearly 1,900 square feet of well-planned floor space. The crisply modern exterior is finished in horizontal channel siding and fieldstone veneer, with either a shake or shingled roof. For a narrower frontage building lot, the carport and upper-level decking could be omitted.

The deeply weather-protected elevated main entry leads into a spacious entrance foyer, which contains a two-piece vanity bathroom and a spacious outdoor storage facility. The foyer could easily be enclosed and isolated to serve as an energy-conserving vestibule or "air-lock".

From the foyer, a central garden atrium runs the full length of the floor plan and divides the lower or bedroom level from the upper or main living level. This central atrium has a vaulted and sky-lighted roof, a circular reflective pool, and sliding glass doors leading onto the angular rear-facing balcony. The passive solar heating features of the atrium could be developed economically at the construction stage, or progressively, as soaring fuel costs increase the need for alternate heating methods. The garden floor could be paved with ceramic tiling, or an indoor pool be constructed, to act as a heat sink for solar energy. The glazed-in roof could be replaced with solar collectors and the home could become virtually self-sufficient in heating.

The main living level is elevated via half-stairway from the foyer and atrium level, and consists of a step-saving U-shape kitchen and a long rectangular living/dining room combination. The living room features an elevated-hearth masonry fireplace and a dramatic vaulted ceiling. Sliding glass doors from

the dining area provide easy access to the spacious side-facing balcony.

Both finished bedrooms are positioned on the lower of the two levels, and well away from the living area for freedom from disturbance. Each has good exposure for view, ventilation and natural light, and each has generous closet storage facilities. The rear-facing master bedroom has a walk-in closet, a sliding glass walk-through leading onto the angular balcony and a separate entrance to the three-piece master bathroom.

A stairway to the left of the entrance foyer provides access to the un-finished loft area. The loft contains 330 square feet of floor space to be deployed as additional bedrooms or as lounge area. Sliding glass doors provide easy access to a spacious deck over the carport.

Should additional area for development be required, a partial basement is positioned beneath the main living level, and is accessible via stairway from the main entrance foyer.

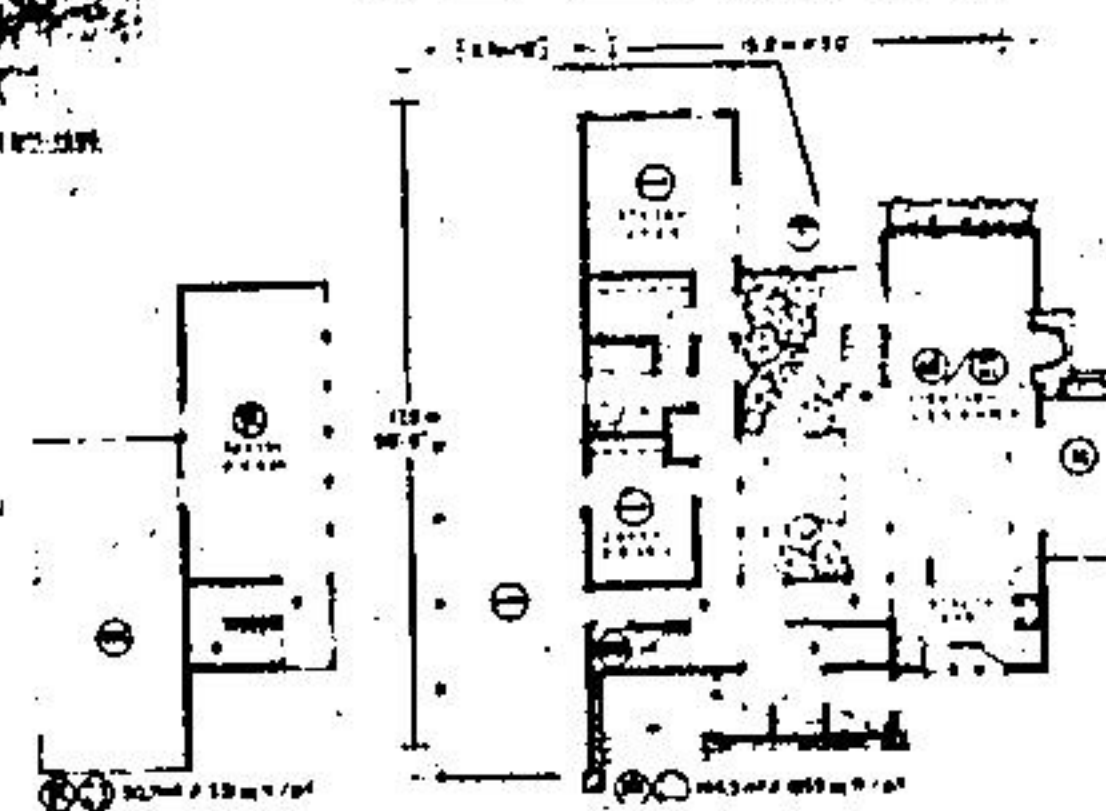
Plans for design No. 1-1552 may be purchased either by the single set, at a cost of \$130.00 for the first set and \$25.00 for each additional set, or by the package. A five-set plan package, including the first set, is economically priced at \$185.00 and an eight-set package, also including the first set, is only \$225.00.

Whichever method you choose, please include \$9.00 for postage and handling. Ontario residents please add 7% sales tax.

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