

Standing on the outside looking in

There are those rare moments, when, as a parent, one has to really question the logic behind our kids' actions.

Now, I'm receptive to most things my girls do—in fact, I think it could be said I encourage them to be adventuresome most times.

But once in a while, during those impetuous moments associated with youth, they do something that could best be described as.. er, well, downright stupid.

The most recent act was last Tuesday night.

I got home from work to find Daughter Number Three had arrived just ahead of me, and already had the stuffed M&M Meats chicken breasts in the oven (you know the ones—these particular ones were broccoli and cheese filled..)

It'd been a long day, and lunch had been somewhat inconsequential, so a feast of chicken breasts, mashed potatoes, and little Green Giant carrots was a welcome finish to the day.

As I washed up, she yelled that the chicken breasts would be ready in five minutes.

Taste buds on full alert, visions of sinking my fork into that chicken loomed in my head.

Then it happened—that 'stupid' thing I mentioned.

"Dad," she called from the kitchen, "How do you open the oven door?"

She was kidding—she had to be, right?

"There's a trick to it," I quipped, a weak attempt at a joke, "You pull the handle."

"It won't open," she replied. "I flipped that 'latch thing' over, and now it won't come back."

"Latch thing? What latch thing?" I asked.

Walking into the kitchen I saw her standing at the oven door, the safety latch for the self-cleaning feature firmly in the 'locked' position.

I pulled it to the left to unlock it. It was stuck.

I wiggled it, jiggled it, and finally, I downright reefed on it. It still wouldn't budge.

Through the window of the oven, I could see the cheese oozing out of my dinner, my beloved

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Ted Brown

chicken breast, on the OTHER SIDE OF THE OVEN DOOR!

"What in hell would possess you to flip that latch?" I asked, trying to contain my increasingly starving annoyance.

"Uh, I wanted to see what it did," she replied, sheepishly.

After fiddling a bit more, it was time to admit defeat and call in reinforcements. I called big sister. (After all, it was her oven before I got it.)

I detected the amusement in big sister's voice as she asked me again to explain exactly what the problem was. Now I'll give her top marks—she didn't laugh out loud, but I suspect she was doubled up rolling on the floor after I hung up.

And she didn't have a clue how to open it.

I thumbed through the owner's manual, and found the page dealing with the oven's self-cleaning feature, explaining how the latch was controlled by a thermostat. Once it was put in 'locked' position and the oven was hot, it took 30 minutes to cool down enough to unlock it.

It's protection against kids opening it during self-cleaning. Seems my 22-year-old 'kid' was safely locked out, along with me and my dinner.

I can laugh about it now, but at the time, I was downright (bleeped) off. But looking on the bright side, in retrospect, (after waiting a half hour for the door to release) one thing was certain.

There wasn't a snowball's chance in hell of getting salmonella poisoning from that chicken.

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