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Cornbread in a toaster oven

A toaster oven is, as the name suggests, basically a cross between a toaster and an oven. Although used mainly to warm food, a toaster oven can be used like a regular oven. Because it has two heating elements, one on top and one on bottom, it has three function settings: bake, toast and broil. When baking the bottom heating element is on, when broiling the top heating element is on, and when toasting both heating elements are on. You not only select the mode you want, you must also select the desired temperature [source: Doolin]. Now that you know a bit about a toaster oven, let's find out how to clean one.Unplug the appliance.Remove the tray and rack.Wipe out any crumbs.Wash the tray and rack in warm soapy water.Clean your toaster oven's nonstick coating by wiping it with a wet soapy rag. You can also clean it with a non-abrasive pad with soap. Do not use anything stronger than a nylon pad. Wipe the nonstick coating dry after it's clean.Clean your toaster oven's metal interior with a soap-filled steel-wool pad. When it's clean, rinse it with a wet sponge and wipe it dry.Clean your continuous-clean toaster oven by wiping it with a wet sponge [source: Martha Stewart].Clean the window of your oven with a soapy steel-wool pad. You may want to shine it with window cleaner or with a vinegar and water solution [source: Heloise].Clean the exterior of your toaster oven by wiping it down with a soapy sponge. If it's very greasy, you may want to use a degreasing agent. Never clean the exterior of a toaster oven with a steel-wool pad, as it will scratch the finish [source: Martha Stewart, Heloise]. There are two schools of thoughts on toaster ovens, generally divided into the "Wonderful Multi-Tasker" and "Inefficient Toast-Maker" camps. Food blog The Kitchn suggests quite a few ways to get more out of your non-slot-loading, not-just-for-breakfast appliance.Photo by lokate366.If you happen to have a counter-top oven large enough to warm a small plates, The Kitchn suggests that's a great way to keep your dinners warm before serving, and we agree. Serving meals with a hot plate can preserve fish in its right-from-the-oven state that's crucial to getting the best experience, and toaster ovens' general temperature versatility lets you use them as keep-warm tools for side dishes.Beyond keeping food and plates warm, The Kitchn has a few other good ideas:Toast nuts. Arrange in a single layer on included pan or a sheet of aluminum foil. 350°F for 10-15 minutes, agitating to turn nuts every 5 minutes.Roast small batches of meat: a whole roaster chicken, quartered, fits easily, as does a pork tenderloin, a few pounds of ribs, etc.Anything you'd use the broiler for with the added bonus of using less energy and having more control: your broiled food will be at counter-height with a see-through window.If you're on Team Toaster Oven, what's your favorite clever use? Where does it fit into your normal cooking routine? Thanks for the link, Hilarie!10 Best Uses for Your Toaster Oven [The Kitchn] ...but your activity and behavior on this site made us think that you are a bot. Note: A number of things could be going on here. If you are attempting to access this site using an anonymous Private/Proxy network, please disable that and try accessing site again. Due to previously detected malicious behavior which originated from the network you're using, please request unblock to site. Please solve this CAPTCHA to request unblock to the website Believe it or not, toaster ovens have come a long way since their days as Bagel Bite-making machines. Many have bigger capacities and more features that might make them better suited than your full-size oven for certain dishes. Some of the best toaster ovens can even act as two appliances in one, with high-end features like air frying and convection cooking. Plus, they won't heat up your entire kitchen in the summer. Here are seven of the best models you can buy in 2020. Breville Smart Oven Pro If you're looking for a toaster oven that can do a lot more than cook bread to perfection, you should check out the Breville Smart Oven Pro. This top-of-the-line offering uses "Element IQ" cooking technology to automatically adjust its heating method, allowing you to properly cook everything from pizza to cookies. The Breville Smart Oven is one of the bigger offerings on this list, too, with enough interior cooking space to toast six slices of bread or a 13-inch pizza. This impressive oven also has a convection feature that can speed up the cooking process by up to 30 percent. The Breville Pro separates itself from the competition with advanced features like its slow-cook function, which lets you set the appliance to cook for as long as 10 hours at a low temperature. Sadly, such features don't come cheap. While the host of convenient features — which includes a non-stick coating and an auto-eject rack — help justify the cost, you'll definitely want to make the most of its cooking, toasting, and baking capabilities. Hamilton Beach Easy Reach Toaster Oven with Convection This Hamilton Beach offering brings convection cooking into your kitchen at a reasonable price. This toaster oven can bake, broil, and toast, and with a built-in convection fan, you can be sure that your meals will be evenly cooked. You can also cook up to six slices of bread or a 12-inch pizza at the same time on the adjustable rack. Unlike most toaster ovens, the Easy Reach features a roll-top door that lifts up and out of the way. This gives you easy access to your food and makes it impossible for you to spill on the door. You also get a full-width crumb tray, making it easy to clean. There's no digital display on this toaster oven, but the analog controls are simple and adequate. Not bad for one of the least-expensive options on this list. Cuisinart Convection Steam Oven The Cuisinart Convection Steam Oven is packed with just about every cooking function you could possibly want — and a few you might not — in a toaster oven. In addition to toasting, baking, broiling, and convection heating, the toaster oven harnesses the power of steam. The 47-ounce reservoir provides up to two hours of steam cooking, thus allowing you to make some amazingly healthy and moist meals. It's a feature that costs thousands in a full-size oven, so this is a great way to experiment with a chef-approved technique. You may not be able to fit a Thanksgiving turkey in there, but the oven is big enough for a 4.5-pound chicken. The Cuisinart Convection Steam Oven is perfect for adventurous cooks who want to test out different cooking styles, though it might be a tad too expensive for someone who just wants to toast bread. Black + Decker 4-Slice Toaster Oven If all you want is to make something to smear your jam on in the morning, look no further than the Black + Decker 4-Slice Toaster Oven. This machine may not have convection heating or a steam function, but it easily accomplishes what it was designed to do. This toaster is on the smaller side of the spectrum, measuring a mere 15.5-inches wide, but it can still comfortably cook a 9-inch pizza or four slices of bread in its 10.75-by-9-by-7-inches interior. The Black + Decker 4-Slice Toaster also has "even toast technology," which, as you may have guessed, evenly cooks your toast. A 30-minute timer and crumb tray round out the features on this budget buy, which gives you more than enough time to make some Bagel Bites. Oster Large Capacity Convection Toaster Oven Oster's Convection Toaster Oven delivers many of the features included in top-of-the-line models, but at a slightly more reasonable cost. The toaster benefits from a large interior that's capable of toasting up to six slices of bread at once, a convection mode for faster cooking, an interior light, and digital controls. The Oster toaster also can also fluctuate between 150 and 450 degrees Fahrenheit and can cook for up to 90 minutes at a time. It even comes with adjustable broil, giving you the ability to delicately melt deserts or cheesy breads. A higher broiling temperature works for meats that can fit into its 13.7-by-13.48-by-5.31-inches interior chamber. Cuisinart Digital Air Fryer Toaster Oven Air frying is one of the best ways to cook, bar none. It cuts out all the grease from the oils we're used to bathing our favorite foods in, and can produce a full-cooked meal in less time than a standard oven or fryer. The Cuisinart Digital Air Fryer boasts 1800 watts of power, a 0.6 cubic-foot interior, and a host of different cooking functions, featuring presets like Dual Cook and a low-temperature setting for slow cooking and braising. This Cuisinart oven even has options for dehydrating and proofing. All presets feature a customizable temperature range between 80 and 450 degrees, and the high-velocity fan and heater always work together to produce the perfect chicken nuggets, with minimal operating noise. Breville Mini Smart Oven The Breville Mini Smart Oven is nearly half the price of Breville's top-of-the-line offering, the Breville Smart Oven Pro, but still boasts Element IQ Technology, multiple pre-set functions, a non-stick interior, and a digital display. Its 0.45-cubic-foot cooking space can't hold a dutch oven like its big brother, but it is big enough for an 11-inch pizza. While the Breville Mini does pack power into a 16-inch package, it doesn't have convection heating, a function available on other less expensive models. Panasonic Toaster Oven NB-G110P FlashXpress This tidy little toaster oven uses 1,300 watts of power and a double-infrared heater setup to cook foods as fast as possible while still keep the heat evenly applied. With a 9-inch baking tray and a timer that maxes out at 25 minutes, this Panasonic model is definitely meant for smaller toaster projects, but it's very, very good at them. Panasonic claims that the heating system can cook up to 40% faster than conventional toaster ovens, and there are six preset cooking modes to help out with toast, waffles, rolls, pizza, hash browns, and reheating. Editors' Recommendations Sandy Jones/Photodisc/Getty Images According to Consumer Affairs, toaster ovens and other appliances, under the wrong circumstances, can be a hazard. Toasters and toaster ovens can either turn on spontaneously or fail to turn off at the end of a cycle; therefore, the safest practice is to unplug them after use. There have been numerous recalls on toaster and toaster ovens because of a potential fire hazard. Safety experts found that when the appliances are connected to an electrical outlet, the heating element could energize and impose a fire hazard. If the appliance is near flammable items, it can also cause fires through combustible ignition. Leftover breadcrumbs can create problems in toaster ovens. Toasted bread is fragile and crumbs often fall to the bottom of the toaster oven. When the crumbs accumulate, they can easily catch fire during normal operation. Many toaster ovens have removable trays for easy cleaning. According to Consumer Affairs, owners of toaster ovens should clean their appliance regularly. By unplugging appliances at night, the homeowner can save money as well as a noticeable amount of energy. Although this may seem futile, several unoccupied appliances can add up to a significant amount of wasted energy. To avoid the tedious task of unplugging the toaster oven along with various other appliances, many people use a surge protector to control the power for multiple devices. Our editors independently research, test, and recommend the best products; you can learn more about our review process here. We may receive commissions on purchases made from our chosen links. Final Verdict The Oster Large Capacity Digital Convection Toaster Oven (view at Amazon) earns our top spot due to its versatility and large capacity. Plus, it comes with an internal light so you can check on your food as it cooks. If you're on a budget, we suggest the Black+Decker 4-Slice Toaster Oven (view at Amazon). It's compact, easy to use, and quite spacious for a small oven. Toaster ovens with smaller capacities take up less room overall, making them great options for small spaces, like dorm rooms. If you just want to make more toast than a traditional 2-slice toaster can handle, capacity won't matter too much. Ovens with more capacity eat up more counter space, but allow you to cook larger amounts. If you like to bake brownies, muffins, and cakes or heat up a lot of frozen pizza and snacks, you'll want to make sure the toaster oven can fit standard baking pans and has the depth to accommodate larger pizzas. Measure your counter space before buying so you can compare the toaster oven's dimensions to your available space and know exactly how much room you can give to a new countertop oven. You'll also want to make sure the location you've chosen is close to an outlet and that the cord length can reach it. Consider what sort of controls (and automation features) you like. Toaster ovens may be controlled with buttons, knobs, dials, or touchscreens. Pay attention to what kind of notification the toaster oven gives you when the cooking time is up and if the oven has automatic shut off. Also check to see if you can turn on the oven light without opening the oven door to check on food without losing heat. While the simplest toaster ovens can toast, bake, and broil with ease, others have cooking features that rival your full-size oven plus other kitchen appliances. If you want to broil a steak, make a rotisserie chicken, air fry chicken wings, or dehydrate jerky, there are toaster ovens that can do all of that and then some. You'll also find more toaster ovens with the ability to convection bake. You'll also find ovens loaded with cooking presets for items like bagels, frozen pizza, cookies, proofing bread dough, and slow cooking. These settings help take the guesswork out of choosing cooking time and temperature, but they're only useful if you'll actually use them. Most toaster ovens include a baking pan and a removable crumb tray to help keep the interior of the oven clean. Not all toaster ovens include accessories beyond those basics, but it's nice a feature when you know you'll also be receiving baking trays, pans, and racks that all perfectly fit the toaster's interior. Some ovens include more unique accessories like rotisserie spits, pizza stones, and broiler trays. A toaster oven should be used in an area where it has plenty of clearance since the outside can get hot to the touch and give off a good bit of heat. When you're ready to cook, you'll either begin by preheating the oven or placing your food directly inside. Not all toaster ovens require preheating so be sure to check your instruction manual. Whether you preheat the oven or not depends on what you're cooking. The toaster oven should be preheated to the desired cooking temperature for traditional baked dishes like cake, cookies, and meat. Doing so allows the food to begin cooking as soon as it's placed in the oven. Placing uncooked food in a cold toaster oven will take longer to cook since the oven has to warm up. Preheating is optional for toasting a few slices of bread or warming a plate of leftovers, but be aware that these too may take a little longer without preheating. You'll then place your food on the toaster oven baking rack or tray and set the cooking time according to a recipe, choose a level of brownness for toasting, or select a cooking preset if your toaster oven has them. Most toaster ovens can be used with a small piece of aluminum foil, but it depends on which toaster oven you have. To be absolutely certain it's safe to use foil, check your toaster oven's manual. Foil should not touch the heating element, interior walls, or the crumb tray since it poses a fire risk. Lining the baking tray or tenting a dish with a small piece of aluminum foil without any overhang is usually okay for most toaster ovens. Most foods that can be cooked in a standard oven can also be made in a toaster oven since it bakes, broils, roasts, and toasts. Some popular items include: Toast: Toaster ovens can be used to toast sliced bread, bagels, and english muffins. Instead of being limited to toasting only two or four slices at a time, toaster ovens can usually brown 6 slices of bread or more at once. Grilled cheese: You can also use the toaster oven to make grilled cheese sandwiches, open-faced melts, and quesadillas. To make grilled cheese, you'd simply assemble a grilled cheese with bread, butter or mayo, and cheese as usual while your toaster oven preheats. Then, place the sandwich on the baking tray, bake for a few minutes, then flip and bake on the other side for a few minutes more. It's best to keep a close eye on grilled cheese and melts in the toaster oven to make sure your cheese melts and your bread doesn't burn. Baked goods: Traditional baked goods like cookies, cakes, muffins, brownies, and quick breads can be baked in a toaster oven. The process, cooking temperature, and cooking time are no different than baking in a standard oven. The only difference with baking might be the size pan you use, since full-size cake and loaf pans may be too large for a toaster oven. You can find mini cake and loaf pans that are just right for small-scale toaster oven baking. Leftovers: A plate of leftovers can be reheated in a toaster oven, too. Just make sure to use an oven-safe plate. You can even reheat leftover pizza. You should be able to fit one or two slices of pizza, depending on the size of the slices, and the cook time shouldn't take more than a few minutes. Keep a close eye, since pizza crust can burn quickly. You'll know your leftover pizza is ready to eat when the cheese has melted. Frozen snacks: Things like mozzarella sticks and french fries can also be prepared according to package directions in a toaster oven. You'll just fit a smaller amount on the baking tray than you could on a full-size baking sheet. Meat: Proteins, like chicken, steak, burgers, sausages, hot dogs, and fish fillets can be baked, broiled, or roasted. Bacon slices can be arranged on a toaster oven pan and baked for top-proof perfectly cooked results. Vegetables: Small baking pans of vegetables can also be roasted and a toaster oven is useful for roasting potato wedges and classic baked potatoes. Before cleaning, make sure the toaster oven has cooled completely. After each use, remove the crumb/drip tray and brush away any crumbs that may have gotten trapped in cracks or near the oven door. Most crumb/drip trays can be washed in warm, soapy water to remove any grease or splattered food residue. You'll also want to remove and wash cooking racks and baking trays after each use. For a deep cleaning, the interior and exterior of the toaster oven can be wiped with a damp rag. If the oven interior is nonstick, make sure to use a soft rag or sponge and avoid scouring pads or sharp bristled cleaning brushes, which can damage the coating. Baked on grease that won't wipe away with a damp rag can be tackled with a mix of baking soda and water. Add enough water to baking soda to make a paste, spread over the problem area, and let sit for several hours or overnight. Then, wipe (you might have to apply some elbow grease) with a clean rag. Donna Currie is a writer and product tester for The Spruce Eats. Not only is she a bread-making expert (she wrote a book about it!), but Donna has also written roundups on various kinds of ovens, including roaster and pizza, for the site. She's also reviewed a diverse range of ovens for us—one standout was the NutriChef Multi-Function Rotisserie Oven, which she loves making kebabs with. This roundup was updated by Sharon Lehman, a home cook who happens to be a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. She happily makes space for any gadget that makes cooking faster and easier, and specializes in small kitchen appliance testing and reviews for The Spruce Eats.

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