Toaster Encyclopedia Article

Toaster

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Toaster

The rapid automation of the American kitchen during the twentieth century is due to a greater knowledge and manipulation of energy sources such as gas and electricity. The electric toaster is one of the most common appliances in American households.

While a few prototypes appeared before 1900, the first models marketed to the public were those invented by the General Electric Company of Schenectady, New York, in 1909. These early toasters were simply strips of bare wire wound around mica strips. The wire was heated by electrical current, and the mica strips spread the heat evenly over the bread.

In 1927, a mechanic from Stillwater, Minnesota, invented a toaster that could heat both sides of the bread. He also installed a clock-like mechanism and spring that would cut off the toaster's power and release the toasted bread. In the early thirties further enhancements were made by adding a thermostat that would shut off the toaster's power when the bread reached a certain temperature. The spring mechanism of the toaster was perfected in 1932, and the first pop-up toaster began to appear in kitchens across America. Toasters are now available in under-the-counter models, and in models that have wider slots for bagels or other larger rolls.