1-1-1980

Food Processors

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Comparing Food Processors
If you’re shopping for a food processor, take this publication along to help you comparison shop. As you look at what’s available, make note of features, cost, accessories, etc. This will help you find a food processor that best fits your needs.

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Food Processors

A popular appliance on today's market is the portable, motor-driven food processor that will slice, shred, chop, knead, mix, grate, and crumb recipe ingredients in seconds. There are about a dozen American and imported models on the market, with prices ranging from $50 to more than $250. Thanks to advertising, most everyone knows something about food processors, at least enough to wish there was one in the kitchen at home. But the question is—do you need one? If so, how do you make a selection? This publication will help you with those decisions.

First, Some Questions
- Who will use the food processor? Does that person have the time and inclination to learn how to use a new appliance?
- Is there a convenient space in the kitchen to store and use the food processor?
- What tasks will the food processor perform that other appliances you already have will not? Could you get an attachment for an appliance you already own that would do the task just as well?
- Is there a need for preparing large quantities of food?
- Will buying a food processor make the best use of your money at this time?

What Can a Food Processor Do?
Here are some basic processes:
- slicing vegetables, fruits, sausages
- shredding firm vegetables, fruits, cheeses
- grating hard cheese, chocolate
- making bread, cracker crumbs
- chopping raw or cooked meats, nuts, vegetables
- mixing cakes, pie crust, quick breads, cookies
- mixing and kneading yeast dough (some models)

What Can't a Food Processor Do?
Since a food processor is a cutting appliance, it can't incorporate air effectively into foods such as egg whites and whipping cream. That's a job for the electric mixer.

For large amounts of food, a blender may do a better job of pureeing. Most processors will not grind grain or coffee beans. Crushing ice in the food processor generally isn't advised since it dulls the blades.

Shopping for a Food Processor
If you've decided a food processor should be part of your kitchen equipment, compare several models before buying. Attend public demonstrations. Ask the dealer to show you a particular model works. Compare the motor, work bowl, tools, safety and convenience features.

Motor — The key to steady, high-speed performance is a powerful motor. Do not judge power by the nameplate wattage alone. See a demonstration of a heavy duty task—for example, if you want a model that kneads yeast bread dough, see how it works before you take it home. Avoid a model that stalls, overheats or has an undesirable noise level. Look for a heavy base, which will reduce "walking" of the appliance while in use.

Fig. 1 shows the two power systems available. For the direct-drive type, the bowl and blades are positioned atop the motor shaft. This type of system will handle heavier loads with less vibration. The other type, belt-driven, has the bowl mounted to one side of the motor. It may take more counter space.

Work Bowl and Cover — To keep a close eye on what's happening to the food in the processor, the work bowl and cover should be made of clear, shatterproof plastic (fig. 2). A handle on the bowl makes it easier to grasp while emptying. Bowls vary in size, so check the bowl's capacity for dry and liquid ingredients before buying.
S-Shaped Blade and Disc — Food processor blades are made of durable plastic or razor-sharp stainless steel, depending on their purpose (fig. 2). S-shaped steel blades are used for blending and chopping, while plastic blades are used for mixing soft foods or liquids.

Metal discs are used for slicing and shredding (fig. 2). Some food processors come with a reversible disc; others are sold with two or more discs. Additional discs may be purchased separately.

Feed Tube and Food Pusher — The feed tube should be tall enough to keep fingers away from the whirling or blade (fig. 2). A food pusher with graduated markings can be used as a measuring cup.

Safety Features — Look for the Underwriters Laboratories' (UL) seal of approval. It is an indication that the appliance has met electrical standards as well as other safety requirements.

As a safety feature, most processors will not start until the bowl and cover are in place. A signal light on some food processors indicates the appliance is plugged into an electrical outlet. Some models have a circuit breaker to stop the appliance when the motor overheats. Make your own safety check on how quickly the blades come to a complete stop after the motor is turned off.

Convenience Features — A pulse switch, in addition to an on-off control, helps to prevent overprocessing of food. Check to see which parts of the food processor are dishwasher safe. Also find out how easy it is to take the processor apart for cleaning.

A Word of Advice
A food processor can be a wise investment, if it fits your food preparation needs. Be sure a food processor will not be just another appliance to take up counter space.

Take time to study the use and care book. Know what the warranty covers. Practice preparing foods with the appliance until its use becomes second nature to you.