



Photo by Tatyana Gladskih

Control Holiday Cooking Costs

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates cooking accounts for 2 percent of home energy use. This figure does not include energy costs associated with refrigeration, water heating and dishwashing.

As holiday parties and potlucks gear up, DOE suggests you keep these tips in mind to control energy costs:

Don't peek. Every time the oven door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by as much as 25 degrees, forcing the oven to use more energy to get back to the proper cooking temperature.

Turn it down or turn it off. For regular cooking, it probably is not necessary to have your oven on as long—or set as high—as the recipe says. For recipes that need to bake for longer than an hour, preheating the oven is not necessary. And residual heat from an electric oven or stovetop will finish the last 5 to 10 minutes of cooking time. Just remember to keep the oven door closed or the lid on until time is up.

Alternately, if you are baking in a ceramic or glass dish, you typically can set your oven for 25 degrees less than the recipe says. Because ceramic and glass hold heat better than metal pans,

your dish will cook just as well at a lower temperature.

Give your burners a break. For your stovetop to function effectively, it is important the metal reflectors under your electric burners be free of dirt and grime.

Don't neglect your slowcooker, microwave, toaster oven or warming plate. The average toaster oven can use up to half the energy of the average electric stove in the same cooking time.

Information to help you estimate how much energy your appliances use is available at www.energysavers.gov.

Give your furnace the day off. If your next party involves a lot of work for your stove, think about turning down your furnace to compensate. The heat of the oven and all those guests will keep the temperature comfortable.

Make contact. Heat can be transmitted only to pans in direct contact with electric stovetops; the less contact your pan has with the burner, the more energy the stovetop must expend to heat the pan. If cooking with your warped pan is taking longer than it should, it may be time for a flat-bottomed update.

Is My Heat Pump Working Properly?

As the temperature turns colder, here are some tips to help you know your heat pump is working properly.

In extremely cold weather, a properly working heat pump will run almost continuously. This is the way they are designed to work. If it is not extremely cold and your heat pump seems to run all of the time, you should contact a service technician.

During winter, it is normal for the heat pump to have a buildup of white frost on the outside coil during cold, damp weather. The buildup can completely cover the outdoor unit. A heat pump will change to defrost mode automatically every 30 to 90 minutes.

If you have a heavy buildup of clear ice, you should call a service technician.

When your heat pump goes into the defrost cycle, it uses heat strips or auxiliary heat to melt the ice off the outside coil. An auxiliary heat light will appear on your thermostat during very cold weather, letting you know auxiliary heat is being used along with the heat pump to maintain the desired temperature in your home.

If you notice your heat pump is running more than usual on mild days or the auxiliary light is coming on in mild weather, you should call a service technician.

Heat pumps make strange noises at times, more so in the winter. Whooshing, tinny or air-brake sounds are normal noises the heat pump may make.

Klickitat PUD offers rebates to upgrade your heating system or replace an inefficient heat pump if you currently heat with electric.

Contact Energy Services for program specifications and rebate amounts before you start your project at (509) 773-7622 or (800) 548-8357, ext. 622. ■