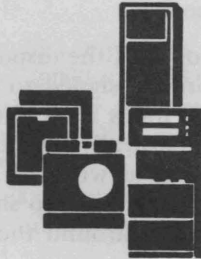


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DISPOSERS AND COMPACTORS

Janice Garrett*

Food disposers and trash compactors offer safe, clean and convenient methods of helping with kitchen cleanup chores. These cleanup appliances

also contribute to the environment by providing sanitary methods of disposal for both food and nonfood wastes.

FOOD DISPOSERS

A disposer is a motor-driven grinder or shredder which reduces food waste to particles small enough to be washed down the drain. All disposers require water to operate. Water softens the garbage, prevents overheating of the motor and flushes away the debris. Disposers should be operated with COLD water only. Cold water solidifies and shreds fats and greases, preventing them from coating the inner parts of the disposer and hampering its operation.

A disposer can digest most food wastes, including fruit rinds and pits, corn husks, egg shells, seafood shells, fats and greases, coffee grounds and small bones. But it is not designed for disposal of non-food waste and large bones. These are items for the trash compactor.

The two basic types of food disposers on the market both operate on the same principle. When selecting a disposer, you will have to decide if your needs and budget indicate a batch-feed or continuous-feed type.

Batch-feed Disposer

The batch-feed disposer features a locked cap placed over the opening after food has been scraped into the disposer. Grinding does not begin until the cap is locked and the cold water is turned on.

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The cap provides safety for hands and silverware and prevents splattering during operation. The batch-feed disposer has a greater capacity than the continuous-feed type but is usually more expensive.

Continuous-feed Disposer

The cover for the continuous-feed disposer is a rubber guard which allows food to drop through the opening continuously during operation. The guard also helps to prevent splattering. Operation begins with a flip of a wall switch near the sink. When this type is used, cold water must be turned on before the switch.

Construction Features

Check for these features when purchasing a disposer:

- **Motor horsepower**—Power is needed for the grinding action. Most models have a $\frac{1}{3}$ -horsepower motor which operates on a 110-120 volt, 60-cycle alternating current.
- **Capacity**—Most models have a 2-quart capacity. Larger capacity disposers are usually more expensive, and bigger models take up more storage space under the sink.
- **Jam-resistant mechanisms**—Jamming or stalling may occur when food materials get caught in the rotating blades, causing them to stop.

Disposers which have jam-resistant mechanisms are equipped with a switch that reverses the motor or have blades mounted on a pivot.

- **Blades**—More economical models have ordinary steel blades which will become dull after a certain amount of use. These blades do not have to be replaced but will require a longer time to grind up each batch of garbage. Other models feature high-carbon or stainless-steel blades that maintain their cutting edges longer and are more efficient.
- **Insulation**—The operation of a disposer is noisy. All models have some insulation, but some are equipped with heavier insulation that greatly reduces the noise level.

Deluxe models which offer better quality blades and extra noise-control qualities are much more expensive than the regular models. The buyer should decide if the difference in the blade efficiency and noise reduction is worth the higher cost.

Installation

Local electrical and plumbing codes should be followed when a disposer is installed. Plumbing recommendations vary with the number of sink bowls and/or dishwasher used. It is desirable, however, to have separate drains and traps for the disposer and dishwasher.

Another consideration for the prospective disposer buyer is the ultimate disposal of the waste. Before installation, a check should be made to see if the local city permits connection of disposers to the sewerage system. A septic tank can be used if its capacity is adequate (based on the number of people in the household and the number and frequency of use of water-bearing equipment in the home). Disposers can be counted as another family member when determining if a septic tank is

adequate. Recommendations on the size of septic tank needed can be obtained from the State Health Department.

Use and Care

Observing these precautions will help to prolong the life of your disposer:

Do not overload or pack the disposer with waste or insert items it is not designed to grind. Allow sufficient time for all foods to be disposed at each use; harder materials naturally take longer to grind. If possible, mix hard food with soft. Cut fibrous materials, such as carrot tops, into short lengths to keep them from winding around the blades.

To clean the disposer, fill the sink with cold water, and, with the cold water running, operate the disposer until the sink is empty. Halved lemons can be ground to give the disposer a fresh odor. Do not use drain-cleaning chemicals—their corrosive action may damage the interior of the disposer.

The most important point to remember when using a disposer is **SAFETY FIRST**. Be sure the disposer is **OFF** before sticking your hands into the disposer to retrieve a fork, even if it is a family heirloom.

Repair

Disposers require relatively little repair, and these are usually minor repairs you can do yourself. Before calling a repairman, check these points:

If your disposer will not operate, the motor may be overloaded. Turn off wall switch, wait 3 to 5 minutes for motor to cool, press reset button and run cold water full force.

If your disposer is jammed, turn off the switch. Use a broom handle to rotate the turntable counter clockwise to release the jam. Press the reset button. Turn on the switch.

TRASH COMPACTORS

The trash compactor is the newest addition to the lineup of kitchen cleanup appliances. The compactor is designed to compress nonfood waste (such as paper, glass bottles and cans) into compact bundles for easier and less-frequent disposal.

When planning to buy this convenience appliance, consider the following factors:

- **Size** of family and **amount** of trash bulk accumulated.
- **Availability** of home garbage collection. Do they charge rates based on volume/number of containers?
- **Distance** from garbage dumps, if you dispose of own trash, and frequency of trips.

- **Allotment** of space in the home for garbage cans. Is it adequate and does it meet sanitary requirements?
- **Cost**—Does the convenience warrant the initial and operational costs?

Operation

All household compactors operate on the same basic principle: 2,000 to 3,000 pounds of mechanical pressure compacts the trash to one-fourth its original volume in approximately 1 minute. Different types of mechanical means are employed. The main concern is performance and even pressure distribution. Before buying, ask for a demonstration.

Use the trash compactor as you would a trash can—put trash in as it accumulates. A compactor requires a minimum of 2 to 7 inches of trash for maximum compaction, but it cannot effectively compact a full load at one time. Since frequent operation is required, place the compactor in the kitchen where most trash generates.

To operate, place the garbage in the pull-out drawer, close the drawer and push the "START" button. The compaction cycle begins. Repeat this process until you have a full load. A full, compacted load normally holds about 25 pounds of trash, the amount of trash usually accumulated in 1 week. The trash bag then must be removed, sealed and discarded and another one replaced. Check to see if the bag is easy to replace and if it is located for easy removal. Also, check to see if you can pick up 25 pounds of compacted trash.

Construction

Rugged, all-welded frames are necessary for compactors to absorb operating stresses. Ask about the expected life span of the container. If the unit is to be a built-in, determine if it flexes or grows under a load. If it does, a tight fit is not desirable. Compactors constructed of rust-resistant parts and designed to take the stress of broken glass and crushed cans will give longer and more satisfactory performance. Look for enamel exterior finishes.

A 1/2-horsepower motor is necessary for dependable and durable operation. The compactor runs on a normal kitchen outlet—115 volts, 15 amperes.

Features

Check for these features when selecting a trash compactor.

- **Appearance**—Since compactors are usually placed in the kitchen, they are of cabinet

height and can be fitted into a 15-inch cabinet space. Built-in and free-standing models are also available. You should measure ahead and know your kitchen's space limitations before shopping. Compactors come in a choice of colors to match most other appliances. Some are designed with a removable front panel for custom decorating to match a kitchen color decor. Others offer a wood chopping block for the top. Another optional feature is a built-in storage compartment for bags and deodorizer cans.

- **Loading ease**—Bin capacity needs to be large enough so that large items such as detergent boxes and milk cartons can be loaded conveniently. Some models offer a tilt-down access door at the top of the unit for easy loading of small items.
- **Safety**—Check for safety features. Most models will not operate until they are unlocked by a key. Remove the key after each use and keep it in a safe place out of reach of children. Some models also provide an automatic reversing switch, which allows you to stop and reverse the cycle in case you suddenly miss some silverware, plus a mechanical interlock to insure that the drawer will not come open during the compaction cycle. Look for a UL seal of approval for the entire unit to make sure minimum safety and operational standards have been met.
- **Quiet operation**—Some compactors operate more quietly than others. However, compactors generally have a lower noise level than a dishwasher or a food disposer, except for occasional "outbursts" from glass being broken.
- **Disposable parts**—Most compactors require special trash bags. In some models, specially treated plastic bags are used to reduce bacterial growth and odor, while in others paper bags lined in plastic are used, with the contents automatically sprayed with a deodorizer from an aerosol can each time the drawer is opened and closed. It is important to use the parts or accessory goods recommended by the manufacturer. Before selecting a model, consider the added expense of purchasing one or more bags a week plus the periodic purchase of deodorizers.

Care

Caring for a compactor requires changing trash bags as well as occasional soap and water washing of critical parts to clean up spills. Before purchas-

ing a compactor, check to see if the ram, container and inside of the unit are easily accessible or removable for cleaning.

Repair

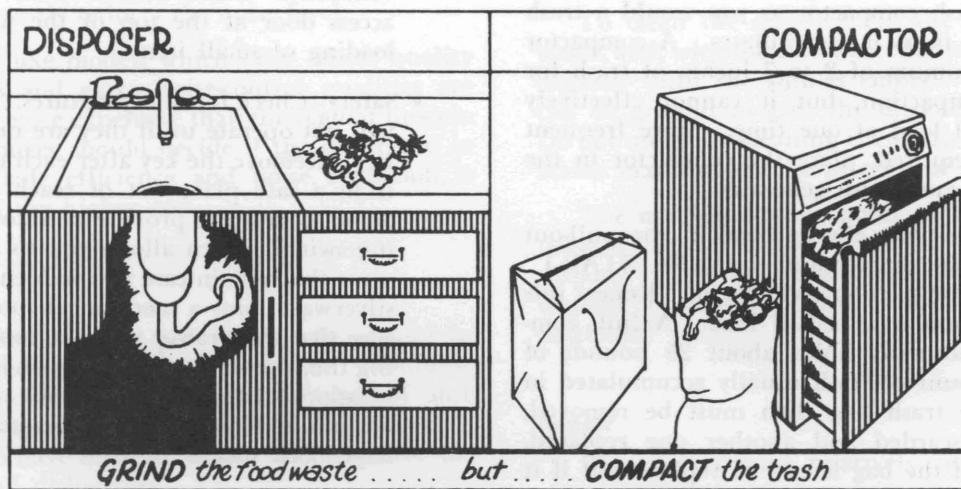
If your compactor does not work properly, check these points before calling the repairman. Be sure that

- Drawer is firmly shut. Check for trash behind or under bin that might be preventing proper closing.

- Drawer is locked in "ON" position.
- "START" button is pushed.
- Drawer is filled to proper level. Some models will not start to compress until one-third full.

Extra Reminder

Disposers and compactors each have specific duties to help you in your kitchen cleanup chores. Remember to "grind the food waste" but "compact the trash."



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