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(Moderators: [Scott Sanders](#), [Jeff Friend](#))

 Self Cleaning Oven (Read 1042 times)

Tom Neitzel
Forum Administrator
★★★★★

Posts: 4559

Self Cleaning Oven

Sep 15th, 2011, 10:05am

Was just cleaning some stuff the other day and was thinking that we don't see many before and after pictures of the process. I happen to like it and put almost everything in rather (less items that can be hurt like handles and bails). It's quicker than lye, although I do have a lye barrel for items with lots and lots of crud (to keep the smoke from the oven down).

This is an electric Kenmore range. The top picture is before. The aluminum krumkake iron is marked Rustad. I don't think most people realize how scarce aluminum Rustad irons are. They were made for a short time after 1946 and before 1949. The name quickly changed to Plastics For Industry, then NordicWare, all by 1949.

In the back and bottom is a Griswold finger hinge waffle iron, the bottom right corner has a Lodge Pooh pan (just for John 😊).

The bottom shows the after, just after the door unlocked and I could open it. What looks like dust on the cast iron is the ash from the seasoning. It is also on the aluminum but just can't be seen easily. The oven doesn't remove rust so the cast iron now goes into the electro for a short cleaning.

I did a quick cost analysis a couple years back, Oven vs. Electro and was amazed at how expensive the Electro is, so I like to keep it short if I can. I'll see if I can find that thread.

I use just the standard cleaning cycle, 3 hours. Overall it takes about 4 hours from start to finish.

Tom

 [Self_Cleaning_Oven_combined.jpg](#)



Mike Knight

Posts: 70

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #1 - Sep 15th, 2011, 10:36am

Hello Tom: As a newbie, I recently queried the forum regarding the self-cleaning process and was met with what appeared to be unequivocal responses against it. To me this was a very attractive option (given my wife's vehement opposition to the use of lye) but I'd perished the thought after reading those responses. Now that you, a veteran, have chimed in regarding this as a meritorious process, I am again confused.

So how come this is not mentioned as one of the cleaning and restoration methods on the home page? Have you damaged or destroyed a piece through this process? Please don't take these questions as my throwing a grenade here, I am truly interested. In a short period of time, I've accumulated about 8 pieces (not including a WI I received busted) and 7 of them are early ones (gate-marked). If I were confident of this process, I'd have used it...it is extremely attractive.

I am hoping that some of the learned naysayers might also contribute here.

Thanks, Mike

Tom Neitzel
Forum Administrator
★★★★★

Posts: 4559

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #2 - Sep 15th, 2011, 10:55am

Mike, I will not argue either for or against most cleaning methods (except sand blasting using traditional abrasives like silicon dioxide and aluminum oxide - never), so you can decide. I've never damaged an item in the oven, to my eye anyway. Again, I'm careful to remove parts that could be damaged. You can believe that aluminum handle in the picture would have drooped if it was too hot. If I do leave a steel handle it will darken, possibly soften a little, but not much. I can always restore the proper color with EvapoRust anyway.

I believe a self-cleaning oven cycle heats slowly and evenly to around 900 degrees (F). Then it cools slowly. Assuming your oven thermostat is set properly, this is well below the temperature at which a piece would be damaged.

Most complaints with this method are about the smoke. There can be a lot but if you have an outside vent it takes most out.

Ask questions as you have now. Ask people for evidence. Do those that advocate against one method or the other have actual experience, have actually tried it and had bad results, or are they just parroting what they have heard?

I'm not telling you what to do or what is best. I'm just documenting what I have done and learned. You might not get the same results if your tools are not working properly. Pick up a sacrificial piece or two at the thrift shop and try it.

As far as aluminum goes, I'm talking about cast aluminum. Pieces that are stamped out of sheet aluminum will likely melt or droop in the self-cleaning cycle (might not, but it's not something I would try, although I might put an old cookie sheet in next time and see.)

Not a definitive answer for you, just something to get let you think about.

Tools I like to use include lye, electro, self-cleaning oven, soda blasting, walnut shell blasting and, the most expensive, EvapoRust. And sometimes I just leave the pieces as found.

Tom

Mike Knight

Posts: 70

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #3 - Sep 15th, 2011, 11:12am

Thanks Tom. As I mentioned, it is not my intention to have you argue for or against the process, rather to provide your experiences, as you have indeed thoroughly done. With that, I would love to hear from others regarding their direct experiences with this method--good and bad. I guess the only "iffy" question I'd asked was why this isn't touted as an approved method on page one of this site. Again, I'm confused (nothing new). I don't expect that any method is foolproof, but if I decide to try it (even with a cheap, sacrificial piece, as Tom has prudently suggested) I'd like to be armed with some degree of *reasonable* expectation.

Scott Sanders
Moderator
★★★★★

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #4 - Sep 15th, 2011, 2:59pm

Tom....Thanks again for your input. The before and after pictures are helpful. Also, showing that it can be done safely is a big help to those considering this cleaning method. I am one of those that have not tried this, but I also have

Posts: 1300

made no comments against it. I just haven't tried it. One question for you....On our electric oven, I believe it gives instructions to remove the wire racks before using the self-cleaning feature. This might be one reason I have not tried it...no place to put the iron. Do you have a separate set of oven racks that you use just for cleaning your aluminum and iron?? I would be willing to try this method, but I'm not sure about leaving the racks in the oven.

Again, thanks for your input. I think a lot of folks here value the knowledge that you share with us.

Scott

Mike Knight

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #5 - Sep 15th, 2011, 3:38pm

Scott: I'd noticed that you hadn't made any statements about the SCO method. You were clearly concerned enough about destructive temps to start that very scary fire-damage thread.. and yet you are still open-minded about SCO.

Posts: 70

I am still sick thinking about the callous shipper who destroyed something in existence since James Garfield was in Washington, so I'm trying to keep my mind from hearing only what it wants to with this.

Mike

Scott Sanders

Moderator



Posts: 1300

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #6 - Sep 15th, 2011, 3:55pm

Mike....I guess I hadn't made any comments one way or the other on SCO's because I haven't tried it. I am sure that somewhere in some of my posts that I have said that "some folks use self-cleaning ovens". Also, I think that some of the posts regarding SCO's commented on the high temperatures of the SCO and it was more or less concluded that those temperatures would be much less than those of a raging bon fire. Although many are skeptical about using the self-cleaning oven method, there are those that do use it with success. Once again, these different methods are discussed to inform those looking for ways to clean their iron and to help them feel comfortable in their choices.

Did I miss a post somewhere???? Did you lose a piece of cast iron due to poor packing or rough shipping??? Did you post pictures??

Scott

Mike Knight

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #7 - Sep 15th, 2011, 4:06pm

Scott: Thanks for asking. On Tuesday night, I received a Griswold American WI, 1880 patent date; the base was broken through. I posted photos and a short narrative on my dealings with the Seller. In the course of discussion, I learned something about Ebay developments concerning insurance and shipping burdens (all positive if you're a buyer). It's on the WAGS Ebay forum under the thread; "How not to pack CI."

WAGS: Heartbeat of Cast Iron Cookware Collecting

Posts: 70

Mike

Chuck Rogers

WAGS member



Posts: 8632

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #8 - Sep 15th, 2011, 5:43pm

I've used the SCO method in the past, and my only fear is any steel handles. The high temps will affect the tempering of the steel. Makes them soft, and easily bendable. Since WI handles can be removed, I don't see a problem, but bale handles aren't so easily removed in some cases. I'd just as soon avoid the SCO in those cases.

Here's what the SCO can do for aluminum.

BEFORE

[hs2_006.jpg](#)



Chuck Rogers

WAGS member



Posts: 8632

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #9 - Sep 15th, 2011, 5:45pm

AFTER. The handles were removed from the paddles. The base was done using lye and or electro, so no need to remove the bale on it.

[hs_004.jpg](#)



Chuck Rogers

WAGS member



Posts: 8632

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #10 - Sep 15th, 2011, 5:48pm

Don't get me wrong. The aluminum didn't look like that when I pulled it out of the oven. It looked more like this. Just ash left behind, and the need for some shining to be done, but no hassle with the gunk.

Mike Knight

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #11 - Sep 15th, 2011, 6:15pm

WOW! Chuck, that is impressive. Do you have any reservations about using this method for the relatively early stuff such as a gate-marked spider skillet, or an early waffle iron like the Norths, Harrison & Chase one you'd shown off? I'd read someone on the internet that earlier pieces are thinner and more fragile. Looking at mine, I'm not sure I can tell if that's true. I don't know much about the Griswold you've shown, but it does look fancy enough to not risk destroying it by a renegade process.

Mike

Tom Neitzel

Forum Administrator



Posts: 4559

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #12 - Sep 15th, 2011, 6:22pm

[Quote from Scott Sanders on Sep 15th, 2011, 2:59pm:](#)

TO our electric oven, I believe it gives instructions to remove the wire racks before using the self-cleaning feature. This might be one reason I have not tried it...no place to put the iron. Do you have a separate set of oven racks that you use just for cleaning your aluminum and iron??

I've just got the one set of racks you see. What happens is that they discolor (chrome - hot - discolor). That's all. Folks might think they soften but I've not found that. I've not got a giant load in the picture but there is no bending down. So if you are fussy about having shiny racks - get another set. If not, just have at it. Once you are done spray a little squirt of PAM on the racks where they slide in the oven so they go in and out nice.

Tom

Chuck Rogers

WAGS member



Posts: 8632

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #13 - Sep 15th, 2011, 8:43pm

I've actually never done iron in a SCO. Just the aluminum. The thinner the iron, the more cautious I am with it. If there is a gentler way of cleaning it, I would rather do that. I don't want to be the one responsible for destroying something that's survived for 100+ years. JMHO, but I feel better this way.

Scott Sanders

Moderator



I'll look for iron

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #14 - Sep 15th, 2011, 9:01pm

Tom....thanks for the info on the oven racks

Chuck...thanks for the additional photos of SCO cleaned aluminum

just about anywhere

Posts: 1300

Mike.....looked at the photos on your broken W/I base....it could have been prevented.. 😞

Scott

Tom Neitzel
Forum Administrator
★★★★★

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #15 - Sep 15th, 2011, 9:26pm

Quote from Chuck Rogers on Sep 15th, 2011, 8:43pm:

I've actually never done iron in a SCO. Just the aluminum. The thinner the iron, the more cautious I am with it. If there is a gentler way of cleaning it, I would rather do that. I don't want to be the one responsible for destroying something that's survived for 100+ years. JMHO, but I feel better this way.

Chuck, just my thoughts, I believe heating an old, thin griddle or skillet on top of the stove is more stressful on it than heating in the oven. You have uneven heat on just one side, possibly not even covering the whole piece. It's cold on top. Then if you cook on it, you are throwing something relatively cold onto the hot surface. It's a tough life on the stove top.

Now the oven, it's like an annealing process. Nice even heat all around, top, bottom, sides. Slow even heating. Slow even cooling. No thermal shocks or stresses. Relatively speaking a nice, gentle environment. A good place for 100 year old gated guy to relax and let go of his stress - a cast iron spa so to speak 😊

Only my opinion. 😊

Scott Jarvis
WAGS member
★★★★★

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #16 - Sep 16th, 2011, 10:05am

I have never used the SCO and know nothing about it. What does it do to a really rusty piece, does it clean rust. Also cost vs. electro was mentioned earlier. I am know electrician but I was surprised there was a huge cost difference. My battery charger when on 10 amps runs between 5-12 depending on how big of a piece I put in the electro. I am sure that an oven on self cleaning cycle would draw a lot more amps then that, maybe not but I am just thinking out loud. So an electro running for 8-10 hours shouldn't burn much more power then an oven burning on high for 4 hours.

Posts: 954

Mike Knight

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #17 - Sep 16th, 2011, 10:14am

I just wanted to say that I was reading Tom's latest post last night while in bed with my iPad and that last paragraph lulled me into a comfortable sleep.

"Now the oven, it's like an annealing process. Nice even heat all around, top, bottom, sides. Slow even heating. Slow even cooling. No thermal shocks or stresses. Relatively speaking a nice, gentle environment. A good place for 100 year old gated guy to relax and let go of his stress - a cast iron spa so to speak."

Are you a hypnotist? If not, you should be.

I needed that!

Tom Neitzel
Forum Administrator
★★★★★

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #18 - Sep 16th, 2011, 10:52am

Mike, I think a lot of my posts put people to sleep. 😊 zZ

When thinking about operating cost, think duty cycle. SCO doesn't run much once hot.

Tom

C. B. Williams
Forum Administrator
WAGS member
★★★★★

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #19 - Sep 16th, 2011, 12:00pm

Mike: I have used the SCO on several pieces. The only real problem I found was putting a really cruded up piece in because it got the kitchen really smokey. I will probably use it again, but it will be on a piece that is not really cruddy. As for your wife's fear of lye. Has she ever eaten olives? If so she ate a product that was cured in lye. That also goes for hominy, which is corn treated with lye. Used properly, lye is just not that bad. We have a lot of threads about using lye, so I'm not going to repeat those things to do or not to do.

Posts: 5348

Chuck Rogers
WAGS member
★★★★★

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #20 - Sep 16th, 2011, 12:09pm

You make a good point Tom. The slow even heat of the SCO should be ok for the iron. Also, the SCO is a good method for those who only have to clean a few pieces, and done. They only have to tolerate the smoke and odor once, and that's it. Very cost effective compared to an electro, or lye bath. Anything beyond a few pieces, I would consider a lye bath, and 50/50 vinegar soak.

SCO for rust..... I don't think it would have any affect on it. Haven't really seen results though.

Paul Beer
WAGS member
★★★★★

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #21 - Sep 16th, 2011, 1:19pm

Back before we came up with the electro I used the SCO exclusively and had good results. I only used it on iron. The problem as has been stated is the smoke and smell. Also, it does not remove rust so I used the vinegar water method to do that. Another caution is using it too often as the heat it generates will make the surrounding cabinet material get very hot. The electro is the best method of all and it's all I use now.

Posts: 1431

Scott Jarvis
WAGS member
★★★★★

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #22 - Sep 16th, 2011, 2:05pm

That makes sense about the oven not running much once it is up to temps.

Posts: 954

Mike Knight

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #23 - Sep 27th, 2011, 8:59pm

Well, I took the plunge and loaded up the SCO with a gate-marked gem pan, a Norths Harrison & Chase WI, an early, thin, griddle, and a griswold corn muffin pan. I crossed my fingers, hit the button, and let the cycle run the full 4 hours. When I nervously opened the door, I discovered all pieces intact...no warps, no cracks. Each piece was covered with a reddish, mostly powdery, rust, but I was told to expect that. Next I'll give each piece a nice electro session.

I'm glad Tom posted this thread; I'd have otherwise shied away from the process. 4 pieces in the course of a morning. I am THRILLED.

Mike

Mike Shonfield
WAGS member
★★★★★

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #24 - Oct 5th, 2011, 12:08pm

Tom or anyone else, have you ever put porcelain covered pans in a self clean oven?

I guess one would need to research the porcelain process to get an idea if it would discolor or burn off.

Some say you can use a lye tank to clean porcelain but from my reading you will eventually take it off with lye and most probably dull the finish.

Posts: 1329

Tom Neitzel
Forum Administrator
★★★★★

Re: Self Cleaning Oven

Reply #25 - Oct 5th, 2011, 12:36pm

Quote from Mike Shonfield on Oct 5th, 2011, 12:08pm:

Tom or anyone else, have you ever put porcelain covered pans in a self clean oven?

I guess one would need to research the porcelain process to get an idea if it would discolor or burn off.

Some say you can use a lye tank to clean porcelain but from my reading you will eventually take it off with lye and most probably dull the finish.

I would not put porcelain in the oven. Logically it ought to be alright, but I think there is some risk as you don't know what the composition of the porcelain really is.

I really messed up a porcelain John Wright steamer a few years ago. I don't think it was the lye. I had put it in a vinegar bath for a day to get some rust off and the porcelain lost it's sheen, seemed softer and pitted. Just a mess. I'm forgetting the details, but I *think* it was the vinegar. I'd probably try the lye myself.

Tom