

Get cooking with your new air fryer

By Addie Broyles
Austin American-Statesman

If you got an air fryer this holiday season, you're in for a treat.

These \$60 to \$250 machines have been the next best way to get dinner on the table (after the Instant Pot, of course) for two years now, and its fans are more like devotees, spreading the good word of perfect french fries, crusted salmon, quick and easy kale chips, chicken wings that the family can't eat fast enough and the most succulent steak you've ever tasted.

Unlike electric pressure cookers or slow cookers, air fryers specialize in using dry heat to cook foods, much like a convection oven. Hot air swirls around the food, crisping the outside edges or giving it a roasted or broiled effect, without an oven.

This means it can cook everything from broccoli to chicken tenders, bagels to churros. I've even seen cake recipes in some of the cookbooks that have come through my office.

All year, I'd been thinking about getting an air fryer, and I finally got one on a Black Friday sale. It is a high-rated, 5.8-quart model from GoWise USA that runs for about \$100, and I tried it for the first time on my Austin360 Facebook livestream recently.

The shiny black appliance is bigger than I thought it would be, but it also heats up faster and more intensely than I thought it would.



Minneapolis StarTribune/TNS

An air fryer and toaster oven.

Rather than test it with fries or chicken wings, I decided to make bagel chips using a recipe from "The Essential Air Fryer Cookbook" by Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough (Voracious, \$19.99).

I tossed the bagel chips in a little olive oil, but one of the first big lessons I learned is that you don't have to add oil. The circulating hot air alone will cook and crisp the food. Any additional oil, like the drizzle of olive oil on the bagel slices, can add more flavor.

I also tossed them in garlic salt before adding the pieces to the nonstick basket with a handle that nests into another nonstick pan. That's what you slide into the machine. The digital display has

eight presets, including fries, chicken and fish, and you can manually set the temperature anywhere between 170 and 400 degrees. The bagel chips cooked at 400 degrees and were done in about six minutes, just a few shy of the eight called for in the recipe. I also realized that the device heats up so quickly, you don't really need to warm it up first.

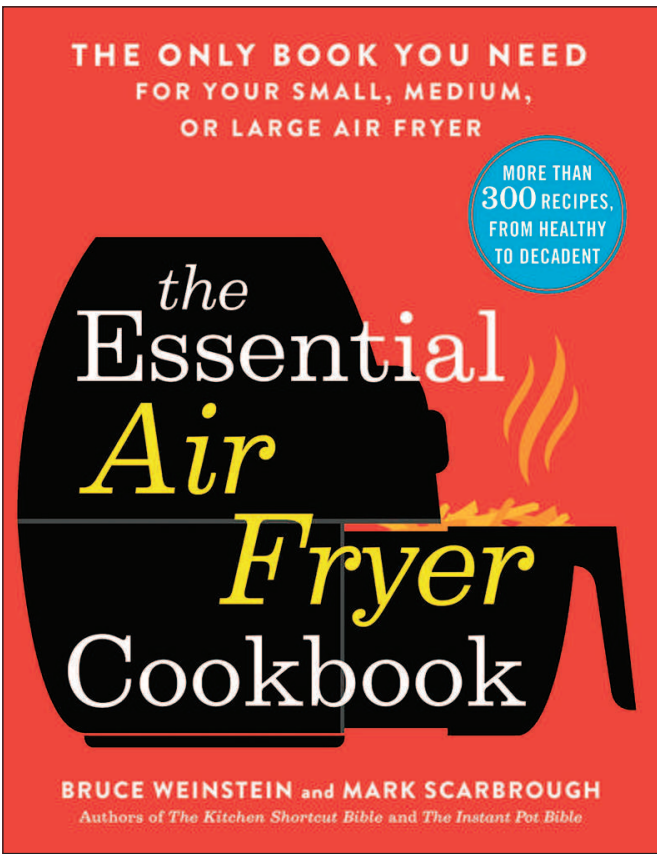
The bagel chips were incredibly crisp and satisfying, and it took even less time than I thought it would. The size of this particular air fryer, however, is also taking up more room than I thought it would. I should have opted for the smaller model.

A reader who has a convection oven reported that

she uses air fryer recipes in her convection oven, without having to change the method or ingredients.

AIR FRYER BAGEL CHIPS

These snackable crisps are perfect for a cheese plate, a snack lunch or a road trip. Use as many bagels as you'd like, and season before and after cooking for bagel chips that bite. Stir or toss the chips halfway through cooking to help them cook evenly. Trader Joe's sells an everything bagel seasoning mixture that is a perfect match for these chips, but so are the spice rubs and mixes already in your pantry. You could use cinnamon and sugar to make a sweet



"The Essential Air Fryer Cookbook: The Only Book You Need for Your Small, Medium, or Large Air Fryer" by Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough

bagel chip, but the cookbook authors don't recommend using blueberry or raisin bagels to make the chips because small pieces of the fruit might fall to the bottom of the fryer and burn. You'll have to use a whole, unsplit bagel if you want full bagel rounds. A bagel already split into halves will yield bagel straws.

— Addie Broyles

salt or other spice mix

In a large bowl, toss together the ingredients. Place them in the basket of an air fryer and cook at 400 degrees for 6 to 8 minutes, tossing halfway through. Keep an eye on the chips during their last few minutes. You want them crisp and brown, but not burnt. Season again, to taste, and serve. Serves 2 to 4.

— Adapted from a recipe in "The Essential Air Fryer Cookbook: The Only Book You Need for Your Small, Medium, or Large Air Fryer" by Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough (Voracious, \$19.99)

PIES

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I had the chance to go picking with another friend and her hiking and berry-picking companion a few weeks later and came home with another quart and a half of huckleberries. My pickings, added to my neighbor's gift, produced the perfect two quarts' worth of berries needed to fill two pies.

As we packed up to travel on Christmas Eve day to our son's house in Roseburg, we made a safe place for our berries to ride along.

An insulated bag kept them frozen for the 7½-hour trip. I thought I'd get the pies made before we continued over the river and through the woods to see the grandparents, aunts and uncles and nieces and nephews who awaited us, but too much holiday cooking, celebrating and game playing stalled that plan.

We made it to our next destination by Friday evening, but by then I had neither the stamina nor the intention of making my pies.

Saturday morning was the time to do it.

I gathered up what I needed from my sister's house and took it to my parents' place to begin the pie baking.

Not all went well.

The two pie pans my sister offered to contain the pies that would be shared among our clan were left behind at her house. Left even farther behind at my son's house in Roseburg was the instant tapioca pudding mix we use to thicken our pies.

No worries. My dad was still at my sister's house just a quarter of a mile away, and had been instructed to bring the pans along when he came home, but he also forgot.

Well, as luck would have it, my mom had tapioca pudding mix and another set of suitable pans. But, she had just one pie moat (a metal ring with no centerpiece in the bottom that catches any pie overflow while allowing the crust to bake evenly). Too bad we didn't return to my sister's for another moat.

Instead, I crowded my two

pies onto one cookie sheet to catch anything that might boil over or drop down from my pies, with the idea of keeping the oven clean.

That plan was thwarted.

Because I failed to trim my pie crust close enough to the edge on each pie, the crust dangled before finally dropping off and landing too close to the hot elements on the floor of the oven.

I also had carved the slits in my crust to allow the filling to vent properly too deep and too wide, allowing the filling to seep out and also drop onto the oven floor.

My mother has always taught me that your pie is not done until it boils over (that's why we never bake pies without first placing a moat or a cookie sheet under them). Well, this time they boiled over into her relatively clean oven to make a big mess.

Worse yet, the dough that had dropped from the crust caught fire and began to

burn.

Luckily we had remained close to the stove and I spotted the fire in time to put it out without any damage, as my mom and dad stood by to supervise the scene.

My pie crusts were covered in the tart juice of my little dark purple berries and were not the most beautiful sights to behold in my opinion.

I had been hesitant to make the pies for fear of my family members comparing them to other better-tasting or prettier pies they have eaten over the years.

But I heard none of that. Instead, we were all happy to gather together for the tasty treat — served with ice cream, whipped cream, or even both, by some.

It's been a long time since we've all shared a taste of huckleberry pie. The moment brought back memories of past family berry-picking trips and plans for taking another next summer.

For me, my neighbors' generosity, my friend's invitation to join her to pick berries, my mom and dad's patience with my pie-making flub-ups and everyone's appreciation of the final product warmed my heart.

I will savor this year's purple pie Christmas memories long after I've made my next trip to the huckleberry patch.

Chris Collins is a reporter for the Baker City Herald.

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