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TOASTY —

Review: The June oven made me want a camera in every cooking device

A fast convection oven and a host of other functions make this toaster oven worth a look.

MEGAN GEUSS - 12/22/2018, 9:00 AM



June Oven

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When my husband and I received a flashy, \$250 Breville toaster oven for our wedding in 2014, we couldn't believe how awesome it was. It revolutionized the two-person meal in our household. We were freed from using the geriatric, unreliable oven that came with our apartment, and cookies, pizzas, and baked chicken dishes were now heated all the way through.

The best feature was the timer; you could pop a banana bread in there, set it for 40 minutes, and go walk the dog knowing that, when the 40 minutes ended, the Breville would shut off, and your food would slowly stop cooking. The Breville also broiled and roasted, too, so I could char peppers in the summer for salsa. Even four years after buying it, I've maintained that it's the best toaster oven out there.

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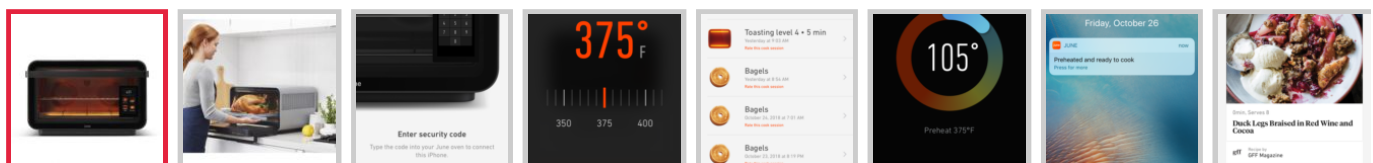
Enter the June Oven. Ars heard about this Silicon-Valley marvel several months ago, and I was sent a review unit to test out. The appliance, which ships in February, is a \$600 Internet-connected toaster oven that acts as a convection oven, toaster, air fryer, dehydrator, slow cooker, broiler, and warming drawer. (Although you'll need to buy June's Air Baskets separately to actually use the device as an air fryer or as a dehydrator, which will set you back another \$50.) You can operate the June from the

touch screen on the front or from the June app. Most importantly, there's a camera inside the oven, which totally changed the way I cook.

Undoubtedly, if you're replacing your current toaster oven and have some cash to spend, the June Oven is worth your consideration. It's not the best at everything, and sometimes its functionality falls flat. You can definitely find something that **toasts and bakes and roasts reliably for less money**. But the June left us dazzled by a couple of features that I can only hope will become standard in toaster ovens in the future.

Even a hard-core, connected-appliances Luddite like myself is considering an IoT toaster oven now. I refuse to keep an Alexa in my house, and I don't want a Nest relaying my home's temperature back to Google. But sign me up for the dystopia where I one day get toast-doxxed. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and I want the world to know that I take it very seriously.

One great thing about the June Oven is that, although it's larger than our old toaster oven, it still fits on our countertop. It's incredibly spacious inside. The oven comes with its own baking sheet, but it fits a number of my old generic sheets and pans. The touchscreen is beautiful and responsive, even if your fingers are a bit greasy or wet from meal prep.



Big Brother (and Little Sister) are watching my Eggos

Clearly the very best part of the June is the camera inside the oven.

With the help of the camera, the June can recognize up to 65 foods and counting. It can differentiate between bagels, toaster waffles, toast, and even corn tortillas, and it will offer a predetermined cook time to ensure the ideal toast, which you can modify based on how toasty you want your bread. If you find that your choice did not render your bread toasty enough, the June automatically suggests an extra 30 seconds of toasting time after every toasting session, so you can inch your way to charred bread in half-minute increments if that's your style.

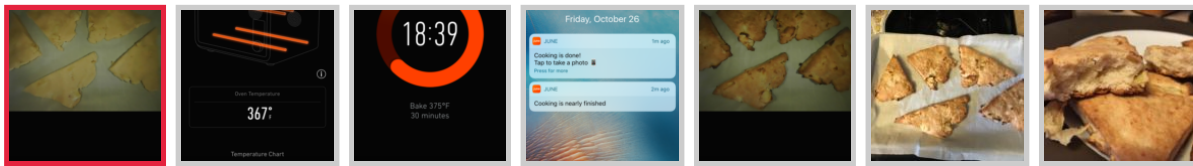
(A side story about toast: I used to work the breakfast shift in a hotel restaurant, and a regular would specifically request that I put his toast through the toaster four or five times until it was completely blackened and hard. He would eat the charred remains with a squeeze of lemon. He would always joke that his toast would give him cancer, but he was easily 75 years old and showed no signs of slowing his toast roll. To each his own.)

The one issue I had with June's auto-cook system was that the oven seems to require three decisions, rather than one, before it starts toasting. Here's how it works: you throw in your bagels, and the June's touchscreen asks you to confirm that you have input bagels. You touch the small image of the bagel. But then June's touchscreen moves on to a gray screen asking if you want cooking tips, and you have to hit "Continue," then "Toast," to actually start the toasting session. Why would I want tips to get a bagel toasted? I've toasted an unhealthy amount of bagels in my life—I'm pretty sure I know what I'm doing here. Forgetting about this weird interstitial screen also caused me to walk away from the toaster before I hit "Continue." Coming back several minutes later to bagels as cold as they were when I took them out of the bag was disappointing but not a deal-breaker. Like Pavlov's dog, I quickly learned the motions required to make my toast desires a reality.

But the absolute best thing about this camera is not that it can tell what you're cooking, but that you can watch what you're cooking as it cooks (and others can, too).

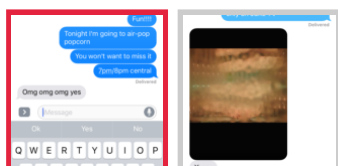
If you open the June app while your food is cooking, you'll be able to select a "live video" screen where you can watch your meat caramelize, your cookies harden, and your chocolate chips melt. When I was cooking something, I would open the app more often than any other app on my phone. It was as addicting as Twitter with none of the trash-fire opinions.

Apple cheddar scones, in dough form.



The next logical step of this "live video" feature, of course, was to share the video with someone. I had my sister download the June app, and, from 1,500 miles away, she gave me the key to pair the app with my oven.

This was revolutionary. She checked the app every morning, either catching my toast or finding my bagels in the June Oven's history. I would alert her when I was about to make popcorn (the air fryer and baskets allow you to make popcorn! More on this later) or when I was prepping salmon for dinner. The novelty of being able to watch someone else's dinner get made from halfway across the country was hilarious and thrilling. The modern world comes with a lot of awfulness, but some of the trivia really is a trip.



My father was aghast when my sister and I mentioned that we watch my food cook over an app. "And you're worried about privacy in the digital age?!" he asked me, incredulous.

Of course, I don't want the government reading my emails, but if June or the NSA or some hacker wants to watch me toast my third bagel of the day, I think the most they'll glean from that is that someone in my household is carbo-loading. (Well, and that someone is home, I guess, but at least abstaining from the toaster oven isn't an indication that we're not home.) Probably there's some way to be truly compromised here, but I'll admit I've not thought through the consequences. As a willing and excited cook, flexing on my baked salmon recipes for whichever corporate overlords own my June video reel seems like a small intrusion.

How well does it work?

Besides the camera, the June Oven excels at some things and falls flat in other respects. The app is beautiful but full of glitches. One issue: when you open the app's cookbook, tapping on the carousel images that appear at the top closes the app. A few times, I was unable to get a live feed of the food in the oven, and the app just presented me with a solid green screen. Additionally, a few recipes in the cookbook list the ingredients you'll need step by step, rather than at the beginning of the recipe, which makes shopping for a meal needlessly hard.

That said, the app does offer step-by-step video instructions for meal prep before you put your food in the oven. This is a real help on more complicated recipes.

One seemingly obvious use for the app is that you can preheat the oven when you're far from the June and find a fully heated oven when you return to the kitchen. But in practice, I never really used

the app this way, because the June preheats really, really quickly. Usually, I'm barely done with meal prep before the oven's audio alert goes off to let me know preheat is complete.

In addition, the convection oven seems to cook quickly as well. Regularly, we found roasts and fish and baked goods to be done several minutes in advance of the time that a non-June-provided recipe would prescribe. (The June-provided recipes, on the other hand, usually came out right on time, which makes sense.) Several times, we found that we overcooked something if we didn't keep an eye on it toward the end.

Interestingly, [an earlier CNET review](#) described the opposite problem: food came out slightly underdone. Perhaps in the time between that review and our review, a software update fixed the previous problem, or perhaps the problem was specific to my review unit or CNET's review unit, rather than general. In practice, though, solving this problem was much like breaking in any other toaster oven: you just kind of have to know the idiosyncrasies of your appliance and, within reason, tailor your cook times accordingly. (Obviously, if this is a constant problem then it's probably a bad oven; no need to become an appliance apologist.)

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