

How do you re-heat the toaster oven category?



OSTER COUNTERTOP TOASTER OVENS

Design Research and Industrial Design

Jarden Consumer Solutions (Jarden) recognized that the toaster oven category was an undifferentiated and crowded space, and in need of innovation. They challenged us with developing a design strategy for the Oster and Sunbeam brands that would disrupt existing market conventions based on consumer behaviors, needs, attitudes and desires.

To gain insights into toaster oven use and the latent needs of consumers, we conducted a series of rapid ethnographies in the homes of a diverse group of people ranging from young singles, to stay-at-home moms, to empty nesters. We discovered that consumers were worried about uneven heating and were confused by the controls found on most toaster ovens. In addition, visibility into ovens was limited and the appliance wasn't seen as safe to use around children. Additional pain-points were discovered around difficult cleaning, dirt and debris collection, no auto shut-off features, and the lack of correlation to the familiar controls found on conventional ovens.



From the research insights, we explored designs that improved access to controls, space efficient footprints, improved visibility of the food, and cool touch rack handling. The final product line incorporated units that were taller and slimmer for compact storage, improved food viewing with a clear "sky light," and improved cleaning and handling through a removable front door and cool-touch side panels. In addition, we incorporated stainless steel accents to convey an appearance that would create a premium aesthetic and help to capture higher margins.



The outcome was a line of sized countertop toaster ovens that were targeted towards three different customer targets. The result was a disruptive design solution for a commodity category that was immediately embraced by major retailers.

Creative direction by THRIVE partner Jonathan Dalton, while at Altitude, Inc.