



Special Report Small Electrics

Petite Power

A new generation of countertop appliances are small and powerful

By Priscilla Martel

Product refinements and new introductions at the International Home + Housewares Show hint at the future in small kitchen electrics. Incremental changes or totally revamped products point to the growing interest in easy-to-operate, multi-functioning devices that occupy a small footprint. Hopeful such advancements will bring more people back to cooking, many manufacturers are testing the waters with connectivity and automation aimed to engage the home chef.

Build a Better Brew

The quality of drip coffee machines continues to improve as companies add new functions such as controlled water temperatures, a novelty as recently as five years ago. Improving the quality of small-batch brewing enhances the versatility of drip machines, often overshadowed in the craft coffee boom by manual pour-over and espresso brewing systems. Cuisinart, Krups, Oxo and others presented new devices and models with adjustable brew strength features, water temperature controls and both thermal and glass carafes. Krups added a turbo function to its Savoy brewer resulting in a 35 percent faster brew time.

For consumers and retailers, certifications bring a sense of clarity to product features. Since 2013, the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) has

certified home brewers that meet its exacting protocol for water contact time and brew temperature among other criteria. “Especially in the coffee maker category,” says Mary Rogers, director of marketing communications at Cuisinart, the SCAA certification “adds value.” At the moment, only six companies offer SCAA certified brewers. Cuisinart is in the process of obtaining certification for its Pure Precision 8-cup Pour-Over brewer.

Some mature brands anticipate success by aiming product relaunches at the millennial market. Mr. Coffee, which its marketers say is the kind of “authentic” and “established” brand millennials respond to, has a new logo and new products such as a single-serve espresso maker.

This fall, Braun re-enters the U.S. market after an 8-year absence; the line includes a drip coffee brewer and other small appliances that are “more accessible” to this demographic, says Eddie Moye, a spokesperson for Braun with the New York firm Current Marketing.

Evergreen Popularity of Blenders and Juicers

With the wellness lifestyle such an established trend that a glass of cold-pressed juice can sell for up to \$10 at a juice bar, marketers point to the strong need for a reliable home juice making solution. The announcement that Juicero, a \$700 juicer that requires an app and proprietarily packed produce, received \$120 million in venture capital funding earlier this year, must be happy news to marketers of juice extractors.

A number of houseware companies are introducing new juicers. Phillips claims that its new patented slow masticating Micro Juicer extracts 90 percent of whole fruits into juice. Cleanup is not an “added value proposition,” explained Phillips representatives as they demonstrated its easy assembly and small footprint.

For fans of mid-century style, Smeg added a 43 RPM slow-extraction juicer to its retro-inspired line in cream, black, pastel blue and red.

Smooth Moves

Year-round consumption of smoothies

▼ Caption for Braun kitchen gadgets.



is at an all-time high, according to data released by Vitamix. In 2015, Americans prepared 3.6 billion smoothies at home. More than 74 million households own a countertop blender and 31 million own a single-serve unit, the company reports.

Such statistics may explain the spate of new entries in the category. KitchenAid's Proline Blender has the best power "transfer capacity" and the "most powerful" 3.5 HP motor on the market, says Jenna Llewlyn of Digitas, the public relations firm that represents the brand.

Kuvings demoed its 1500 watt high-speed machine with a digital display and six presets.

Scheduled for a fall release, Blendtec's Connect Food Prep System will have Bluetooth connectivity, a scale, 100 speeds and 6 presets.

The sleek Smart Power Blender Objecto by Bughatti attracted attention as much for its sleek design and joystick control as for its \$1,500 price tag. And this high-speed blender represents a trend for ultra-premium kitchenwares seen at the show.

With so many offerings of blenders, Vitamix hopes to level the playing field with its Blend Quality Index (BQI). Working with a third-party lab, the company developed a set of protocols to evaluate texture and smoothness of blends produced. (A higher BQI means a smoother product.) According to Scott Tennant, director of communications at Vitamix, the Cleveland, Ohio-based company hopes the industry picks up on the rating system, which is available to anyone, and makes it an industry standard. Rather than comparing horsepower, the system could be used to compare "apples to apples," he said.

Size Matters

From diminutive single-cup coffee makers to supersized pressure cookers, new product releases cater to those feeding a family of one or their entire block. Dash Brand showed Mini Makers that cook a single adorable waffle or pancake at a time. Mi Aroma, Aroma Housewares' individual digital rice cooker now in fresh accent colors, makes two to three cups of white or brown rice at a time. Bella's individual coffee makers, in trendy mid-century pastels, and its new 1.5-liter slow cookers should appeal to the "single girl or empty nester," says Sweetie Ghuman, from Demonstrate PR, representative for the company. And the most prominent launch at the show, KitchenAid's Mini, its 3.5-liter stand mixer, caters to that same demographic.

Miniaturized doesn't necessarily mean fewer functions. Consumers want to "live large" in smaller spaces, said Tom Mirable in his annual trend

seminar, "The New Rules of Engagement." They require appropriately sized appliances that perform. KitchenAid's small food processor slated for fall release is not a mini chopper, KitchenAid's Llewlyn is quick to point out. It's a redesigned processor with the same settings as a larger model.

Millennials would rather spend money on an experience than an object, noted Mirable in his trend talk. Crowd-feeding kitchen electrics speak to the entertaining trend and tie into consumer demand for experiences, he explained. Cuisinart's new multi-function glass topped electric countertop steamer has a 5-liter capacity. Nesco's latest countertop roaster can cook a 22-pound turkey.

Countertop ovens also speak to consumer desire to "live large" in small spaces. The new generation of countertop ovens promises expanded temperature ranges and greater temperature stability. From Dash Brands comes a countertop oven in which one can proof and bake bread, dehydrate or broil foods. Delonghi's Livenza Oven with ThermoShield System might replace a full-sized oven if it delivers on its promise to allow cooking on multiple racks at one time.

Designers need to create products that harmonize the consumer need for "health, joy and ease" in meal preparation, said Kyleigh Wawak of Gravity Tank, an innovation consulting firm. She spoke about her experience as a consumer-oriented food product designer during the Innovation Theater Session called "The Future of Food." Wawak describe working on the Tovala, a smart oven and food delivery hybrid. Consumers interviewed about the product responded favorably to the idea of a "precision cooking device," but they also wanted a multi-functioning oven in order to justify the space on their countertops. The Tovala oven steams, bakes, broils and cooks with convention in one device. (Those choosing the food delivery component would order meals prepared in the company's prep kitchen. The oven scans bar codes on the device then selects the proper cooking method for that meal.)

Panasonic's prototype Countertop Induction Oven, presented at the show, is another such multi-functioning device designed to speed up and simplify home cooking. Slated for third-quarter release, the oven includes a removable non-stick plate onto which food is placed for cooking using the bake, broil or grill settings.

Manufacturers expanded the functionality of their slow- and multi-cookers by adding new cooking features and finishes. Sautéing and browning functions are standard as are grain and rice cooking settings. Zojirushi from Japan added a steel-cut oats setting as well as one for brown rice to its popular Micon rice cooker, now available in a petite 3-cup raw rice capacity.

Special Report

Small Electrics

Precision Cooking Takes Center Stage

Sous vide cooking attracted a noticeable amount of product innovation with such brands as Hamilton Beach and Chantal promoting the technique of cooking foods in a circulating water bath.

According to Pat Schweitzer, consumer test kitchen manager at Hamilton Beach, who demoed the Sous Vide Slow Cooker, millennials are familiar with the technique from television food programs and want to add it to their repertoire. Because it is a trend that some may find “threatening”, she notes, the company’s sous vide device doubles as a slow cooker.

Unsurprisingly, a number of sous vide innovations that debuted on crowd funding like Kickstarter and Indigogo are reaching market potential. Tribest presented its Sousvant, a clear, freestanding, countertop water bath that was funded through Kickstarter last year.

According to exhibitor Scott Hemendinger, inventor of one of the first home sous vide circulators — Sansaire Sous Vide — the technique of cooking in a water bath “empowers” the home cook by eliminating the need to worry about timing. Sous vide is ideal for entertaining, he says, because all of the work is done “before guests arrive.” Any type of food can be cooked perfectly sous vide, he says. Vegetables retain their flavor and colors and, he adds, “You achieve textures you can’t get through any other means.” Retailers may want to keep an eye on demand for devices to support this type of precision cooking.

Connected Cooking

For those more comfortable with technology than cooking, housewares manufacturers are adding such features as touch screens, built-in recipes and pictograms for ease of cooking, although preparing a whole fish on an electric griddle might challenge the most accomplished cook. (T-Fal’s new Optigrill Plus XL, 23 percent larger than its predecessor, includes a fin-fish icon to signify seafood cooking.)

In keeping with the IHHS theme, the Connected Home, manufacturers offered innovations in connectivity and automation designed to speed preparation of a daily meal or beverage.

Take coffee machine advances. The Saeco Gran Baristo Avanti connects users to a lushly illustrated app via Bluetooth. The app allows the user to order from one of 18 specialty coffee beverages that are brewed automatically for the “coffee bar” experience.

An app controls Nespresso’s Prodigio espresso machine, which brews single cups in three sizes. It also alerts the user when the machine needs to be cleaned and when to order more coffee pods, perhaps eliminating the consumer’s need to visit a store for a refill.

Multi-Tasking Mavens

Whether Emeril’s endorsement of a new multi-cooker from Kalorik with an electric stirring mechanism will energize the category remains to be seen, but a number of companies including Black and Decker and KitchenAid are exploring such devices. Black and Decker’s cooking pot steams, stirs and turns off automatically when rice is done cooking. KitchenAid plans to make its Artisan Cook Processor available this year. Home cooks can beat, stir, sauté, steam, purée and mix dough in its 4.5-liter bowl. An optional food processor attachment is also available. Gourmia, an industry newcomer, made a splash with its 10-in-1 Multi-Function Robotic Cooker. The programmable device weighs, preps, blends and cooks food and it includes a digital touch-screen display that shows videos and controls its functions. Company marketing director, Sam Ash, calls it an “internet of things” cooking device or a “smarter Thermomix.”

These intelligent or guided cooking devices represent potential breakthroughs, according to manufacturers and marketers presenting such products. Many expressed the hope that such assisted cooking devices will bring more people back into the kitchen.

Professional Results at Home

Hamilton Beach tapped its expertise in making commercial-grade appliances to launch its Professional line for home chefs that includes a high-speed blender and snap-lid food processor. Their innovations exemplify trends in small electrics — the desire for professional-level cooking at home combined with ease of use. At this show, more than in the past, specialized equipment was on display.

From countertop chamber vacuum machines to chocolate making equipment, home cooks can now cook like restaurant chefs, or at least use the same equipment. The Premier Wonder Grinder with a Chocolate Maker is a bench model commercial grinder/concher for making bean-to-bar chocolate. Many artisans get their start on this device, noted Erin Andrews, chocolatier and the device’s distributor. Also for the chocolate hobbyist, Belgian manufacturer Croquade presented its Chocolatière, a 3-liter tabletop chocolate tempering machine.

Home chefs seek restaurant-quality results, said Mirable, noting that the “maker” trend is inspired by restaurants, professional bakeries and dining out.

Build Repeat Sales with Consumables

A growing number of consumable products are tied to



Special Report

Small Electrics

new or established small kitchen electrics. KitchenAid announced its partnership with Franzese to create a line of gelato and pasta mixes for its devices.

Bosch now sells Best Bread, a dough enhancer for home baking. Sansaire created a steak aging sauce for use in sous vide cooking. And Salton presented Easy Bread Maker, the first capsule bread machine for the consumer daunted by the need to measure, weight and stock fresh ingredients, explained Kevin Chandrarajan, Salton's marketing coordinator.

Retailers and marketers alike appreciate the added value a consumable product brings to housewares sales. "Retailers look at consumables as opportunity to bring consumers back in store, to make ongoing purchases," says Cuisinart's Mary Rogers. At the show, Cuisinart introduced its first branded K-cup compatible coffee pods in three flavors sold in recyclable and compostable packaging.

Consumables also tie right in with the gifting trend identified by Mirable in his trend talk. Finding gifting occasions is yet another way to encourage repeat traffic into an independent housewares store.

At the Crossroads of Color

Color is not the major story in small electrics; however there are a few brands known for on-trend colors. KitchenAid added new hues such as Hot Sauce. More appliances are now offered in lush copper, rose gold and brushed aluminum finishes. And even stodgy appliances like grain mills received a little splash of blue, red or green.

In her color forecast presentation, Pantone's Leatrice (Lee) Eiseman spoke about an industry facing a crossroads and how the right color helps sell a product. She enumerated the ways color can elevate a familiar product like a corkscrew into something fresh with the addition of a layer of gold or a bit of decoration. Most representative of today's changing aesthetic is the acceptance of "power clashing," a term she used to describe the "unexpected combination" of "discordant" colors that seem to work for consumers and retailers at this crossroad.

Eiseman's analysis of color and the popularity of the incongruous mix sum up the state of small electrics. Technologically advanced devices sit side-by-side with the artisan. A consumer might use an app to brew coffee but kneads bread by hand. Or he or she might make bread in a fully automated device and serve it with a scratch-cooked recipe from a favorite chef. Changing demographics and diverse consumer needs add up to an exciting — if challenging — time for small kitchen electrics.

New Products

Omega Juice Cube

The new low-speed masticating juicer from Omega packs itself up into a neat 10.5-inch cube that disguises its power and versatility. With three adjustable settings and an automatic pulp extractor, the

Omega Juice Cube makes juice, nut butter and nut milk and extrudes pasta. Clear plastic parts that are easy to clean give the juicer a fresh modern look. Its small footprint ensures a place on any counter. SRP: \$349.95.

Omega, Harrisburg, Pa, 800-633-3401, www.omegajuicers.com



The Rock by Starfrit Panini Grill

Starfrit's expansion into kitchen electrics includes a four-piece line of countertop appliances coated in the company's patented

surface, the Rock. The 1200-watt Starfrit Panini Grill includes an adjustable temperature control and hinged lid that accommodates a variety of thicknesses. It also opens flat to convert the device into a griddle. The Rock surface technology makes the aluminum 25 percent thicker than other aluminum products and stick resistant. The line also includes an Electric Skillet, Electric Multi Pot and an Electric Griddle. Available in September. SRP: \$89.95.

Starfrit USA Inc., Longueuil, Quebec, Canada, 800-361-1692, www.starfritusa.com

Zojirushi Fresh Brew Plus 12-Cup Coffee Maker with Iced Coffee Feature

With its 200 degree temperature setting, Zojirushi's new programmable 12-cup coffee brewer promises superior flavor extraction. Warming plates maintain the brewed coffee at three



Special Report

Small Electrics

temperature ranges — hi, medium and low as well as off. Iced coffee is prepared the Japanese way by drip brewing coffee over an ice basket inserted into the carafe. A water measurement line for iced coffee ensures the proper brew strength. SRP \$175. **Zojirushi American Corp., Torrance, CA, 800-264-6270, www.zojirushi.com**

NutriMill Plus Whisper Quiet Speed Mill

For those who avoid processed foods and feel that homemade matters, NutriMill introduces a high capacity grinder capable of turning any non-oily grain or legume into



fresh flour. Whisper Quiet technology makes the mill 15 percent quieter than other models. Featuring stainless steel mill heads, a 16-cup grain hopper and a flour bagger accessory, this model is designed for performance. The mill collapses for storage with its 24-cup flour bowl as a cover. SRP: \$259.99.

L'Chef LLC, St. George, Utah, 801-383-1920, www.nutrimill.com



Cuisinart The Fruit Scoop Frozen Dessert Maker

Make fresh fruit sorbet or ice cream with Cuisinart's newest frozen dessert maker, the Fruit Scoop. A specially designed paddle crushes fresh or frozen fruit as it churns it into a chunky or smooth frozen treat. A second paddle allows the 1.5-quart machine to churn ice cream or frozen yogurt in 18 to 25 minutes. A mix-in spout allows ingredients to be added

while the machine is running. For ease of cleanup, the freezer bowl and paddles are removable. SRP: \$99.95.

Cuisinart, Stamford, Conn., 800-726-0190, www.cuisinart.com

Dash Lunch Pod

Whether for the office or the dorm, Dash's Lunch Pod brings some whimsy to the lunch pail. The futuristic-looking red plastic pail with handles that fold into the lid reheats a meal for one and can be used to cook rice or steam foods. Plug it in an hour before needed. Add a can of soup, stew or your favorite grain mixture. A



detachable cord self-stores in the base of the pot. SRP: \$19.99. **Storebound, New York, N.Y., 646-569-9265, www.storebound.com**

Easy Bread Maker ES1000



Salton is breaking new ground with its Easy Bread Maker, an appliance that combines the convenience of a bread machine with the flavors of European-style loaves. The countertop device consists of a removable drawer where the bread

is baked and a removable water tank. Packaged non GMO all-natural bread blends in five flavors — Puro, Alpino, Country Love, Crustino and Mediterraneo — eliminate the need for measuring. Once placed into the device, the contents of the bread capsule combine with water to produce a fresh loaf of bread in two hours. SRPs: \$199.95 for the bread maker; \$23.95 for the five-capsule Easy Bread Variety Pack.

Salton, Vaughan, Ontario, Canada, 289-371-3118, www.salton.com

Nesco Pressure Cooker, PC11-25

Cooking for a crowd just got easier with Nesco's new 11.6-quart electric pressure cooker. The stainless vessel with a programmable timer holds seven to eight quarts and is suitable for cooking soups, stews or foot-long racks of ribs. It has settings for slow cooking, steaming, browning, sautéing and rice cooking as well as low and high pressure settings. Homemakers will appreciate its size when canning high acid foods such as jams, jellies, tomato sauce, pickled peppers and salsas. The Electric Pressure Cooker holds nine half-pint, six pint or four quart jars at one time. SRP: \$129.99.



The Metal Ware Corp., Two Rivers, Wis., 800-288-4545, www.nesco.com

Sansaire Searing Kit

To add the finishing touch to foods cooked sous vide, chefs sear the surface of the food with a blow torch or in a hot pan before serving. Seeking a better way to add a golden brown crust to food cooked sous vide, Sansaire introduces its Searing Kit. It consists of a thick stainless steel searing rack set over an enamel drip tray and a 16-ounce propane tank. Place food on the rack and safely flame-sear foods with dramatic flair. A unique searing head on the propane torch, engineered by

OVER



Benzomatic, delivers a powerful, wide flame that can reach up to 2,200 degrees. SRP: \$159.99.

**Sansaire, Seattle Wash.,
425-202-6252, www.sansaire.com**

KitchenAid Mini Food Processor

The new KitchenAid 3.5-cup mini food processor offers the features of a larger machine in a compact format. Its stainless steel blades that lock into place help tackle small chopping, mixing and pureeing tasks. The power is controlled with a press of the thumb. With two speeds and a pulse function, the mini processor comes in a range of new colors including new Hot Sauce, Cocoa Silver, Watermelon, Majestic Yellow, Empire Red, Tangerine and Pink. Available in September. SRP \$49.99.



**KitchenAid, Benton Harbor, Mich., 800-541-6390,
269-923-5000, www.kitchenaid.com**

Hand Blenders



Braun relaunches its collection of small kitchen electrics this fall. The new products continue the legacy of Braun's premium and sleek look; however, the new line has technologies that will change how home chefs prepare and enjoy their meals.

Braun Multiquick Hand Blenders come in several models and configurations. They feature a new Smart Speed variable control technology inspired by German automotive engineering — allowing the user to intuitively change the speed and power of the hand blender by squeezing more to get more power. The Braun Multiquick 7 Hand Blender (model MQ777) has five attachments, along with the anti-splash shaft — including a whisk, masher, food processor and 20 fluid ounce beaker. The model includes an EasyClick system, a patented design made to ensure that all attachments can be removed in one simple click. The Multiquick 7 Hand Blender (model MQ725), includes a beaker, whisk and 1.5-cup chopper. The Multiquick 5 Hand Blender (model MQ505) includes a beaker and whisk and has two speeds for easy blending, whisking or pureeing. The Braun Multiquick series hand blenders range in price from \$59.95 to \$149.95. Countertop blenders and drip coffee makers are also available.

**Braun Household USA. c/o De'Longhi America Inc.,
Upper Saddle River, N.J., 888-977-3578,
braunhousehold.com/en-us **TGR****