

Tried & tested

MBM's tough taskmasters put some clever new boating kit through its paces. The result? You can buy with confidence

Home baking afloat

A portable oven for your hob

The publicity leaflet for the **Omnia Oven** claims that it will cook almost everything that you would bake in a conventional oven with the use of a single hotplate ring. Having strived to provide wholesome and tasty meals for hungry boaters for over 30 years, I was both eager and sceptical as I set out to test this new gadget.

The majority of boats don't have the luxury of an oven. Compromises must be made and menus adapted when providing meals afloat, and I bet there aren't many ovenless boaters who would attempt to make fresh baked rolls for their breakfast. Not only did I give some



part-baked rolls a go in the Omnia, I also tried a couple of my favourite home-cooked recipes, including corned beef pie and spotted dick.

Cooking times for the Omnia are similar to a conventional oven, although the instruction leaflet does say it is a matter of trial and error. The Omnia Oven required no preparation other than a light greasing of the pan. Lining the circular pan with pastry for the corned beef pie could have been a bit tricky, so I used,

what I call, my "store cupboard pastry" which uses flour, oil and hot water, shaken together in an airtight

container. This gives a soft, malleable pastry that can be rolled with your hands into a sausage shape, flattened and then pressed and moulded into the cooking pan (besides, there aren't many galleys I have been in that have a rolling pin!).

All the items I cooked were surprisingly successful and interestingly, the cooking process produced no condensation on board. The meat pie, which can be eaten hot with lashings of baked beans, or cold with salad, always goes down well with hungry crew, while the spotted dick, which was simply thrown together, is delicious served hot with custard. The spotted dick also sent the most amazing smell wafting across the marina one Sunday morning, so we

had to have a slice with our morning coffee just to sample it...well it would have been rude not to.

Even if you never intend on doing any of this fiddly stuff on your boat, the Omnia Oven is worth having among your on board kit if only for the freshly baked rolls it produces. My part-baked rolls cooked in just 10 minutes and tasted great with butter and marmalade. I would recommend, however, that you cook them topside down as they did look a little insipid.

A few words of warning though; the oven gets extremely hot and the pan has some very sharp edges so be careful. Another point worth mentioning is that you should keep a regular check on whether the flame is still lit under the pan while you are cooking.

Surprisingly, I found no mention of the need for ventilation in the instruction leaflet but I suppose it goes without saying that when using a gas appliance there should always be adequate ventilation.

In short, it works! I can't wait to try out some more recipes – perhaps a basic scone mix, so that we can enjoy cream teas on a sunny summer afternoon.

Pam Frew, Gosport



Cooking fresh bread and other tasty dishes needn't be a chore with a portable Omnia Oven