



MARCH 2017

## A Toast to the Toaster!

### *Toastmaster Toaster*



### VISIT THE BMA

and see *Toastmaster Toaster* in the *Imagining Home* exhibition.

*Toastmaster Toaster*. Waters-Genter Company (American). c. 1932. Chrome-plated steel, plastic. 7 x 9 x 6¼ inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Gail G. Markley, Columbia, Maryland, in Memory of her Mother, Margaret Conolley Gotsch, BMA 2002.595

**BALTIMORE  
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Drop a slice of bread into the slot, push the lever down, wait a few minutes, and POP! Your warm toast jumps up, ready for butter and jam. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the automatic pop-up toaster was a marvel. Earlier electric toasters required a lot of attention. Slices of bread were carefully placed in a wire rack, then dutifully watched and turned over to toast the other side. Red-hot heating elements were often exposed. Fingertips were burned. Countless pieces of blackened toast were thrown away. Suddenly magazine and newspaper ads hailed the new *Toastmaster Toaster* as an amazing time-saver for the kitchen. “No waiting! No watching! No turning! No burning!” “Whole operation in one lever!”

Encased in shiny chrome, with decorative fluting on each side and plastic handles that stayed cool to the touch, the *Toastmaster Toaster* was the image of modernism. Its novelty depended on a spring-loaded timing mechanism inside that turned the electric current on as soon as the lever was pushed down and then shut down automatically when toasting was complete, causing the bread to pop into view. Ads promised that the timer would make it “impossible to spoil a slice of toast. Not merely difficult — impossible!” Users could simply turn a knob to ensure that their breakfast toast would be as light or dark as they wished.

First marketed in 1926, the automatic pop-up toaster was not an immediate success. However, after the mechanical bread slicer was invented in 1928, pre-packaged bread became available and *Toastmaster* sales soared. By the mid-1950s, the company’s 1,200 factory employees were testing their product by toasting a ton of sliced bread every day.

### CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Study an ad for the 1932 *Toastmaster Toaster*. Then write an ad for a 2017 appliance or device that you would like to invent. Draw a picture of it and explain what it can do to make life better or easier. [bit.ly/2IPTBtr](http://bit.ly/2IPTBtr)

Trace the evolution of toasters from early manual models to contemporary designs that use heat to imprint pictures or messages on slices of bread. [bit.ly/2IkHaST](http://bit.ly/2IkHaST) and [bit.ly/2mH92BU](http://bit.ly/2mH92BU)

Take a look at an amazing assortment of toasters from 1900–2000 in an online “Toaster Museum.” [bit.ly/2IPWydC](http://bit.ly/2IPWydC)

PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.



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