

Dehydrators

by Dave Banks – *The Sea Canoeist Newsletter*, No. 5, June 1988

When planning a trip of some length you can cut down your weight considerably by carrying dehydrated food - provided that there is not going to be a problem getting water. There is considerable merit in the idea but, and it is a big but, dehydrated food is expensive. A complicating factor with commercially produced dehydrated food is that often chemicals are used to stabilise the colour of the food and often for the dehydration process itself. The alternative is to dry your own food. Some years ago I was most impressed with a commercial dehydration unit known as the *Havest Maid* which can dry most foods overnight. I tried some sample mince stew, most fruits including whole grapes, onions and left-over Chinese take-aways. Soup will also dehydrate well, and if powdered down, is excellent as a warm drink when mixed with hot water and allowed to stand awhile.

There is a marvellous food dehydrator on the market that sells at between \$350 to \$400, but dehydrators, after all is said and done, all pass warm air of around 47°C over food laid out on trays for 5 to 12 hours. I spotted a line of old electric stoves at an appliance store due for dumping at the tip (trade-ins). They contain all that is needed to make a good dehydration unit apart from the fan and the trays.

Remove the oven elements. Cut an exit vent in the back wall and cover it with mesh. Arrange for a desk fan to blow air over a 1000 watt hot plate and channel this air up through the floor of the oven. Retain the oven light and use the old trays for racks. Now you have an insulated box with a light, a glass viewing window, slides for shelves, and a closely controlled warm-air input. The diagrams below explain the finer detail.

For information about food drying in general the following books should help:

Dry it you'll like it by Gen Macmaniman, 1973 **Published by:** Living Foods Dehydrators, Washington,

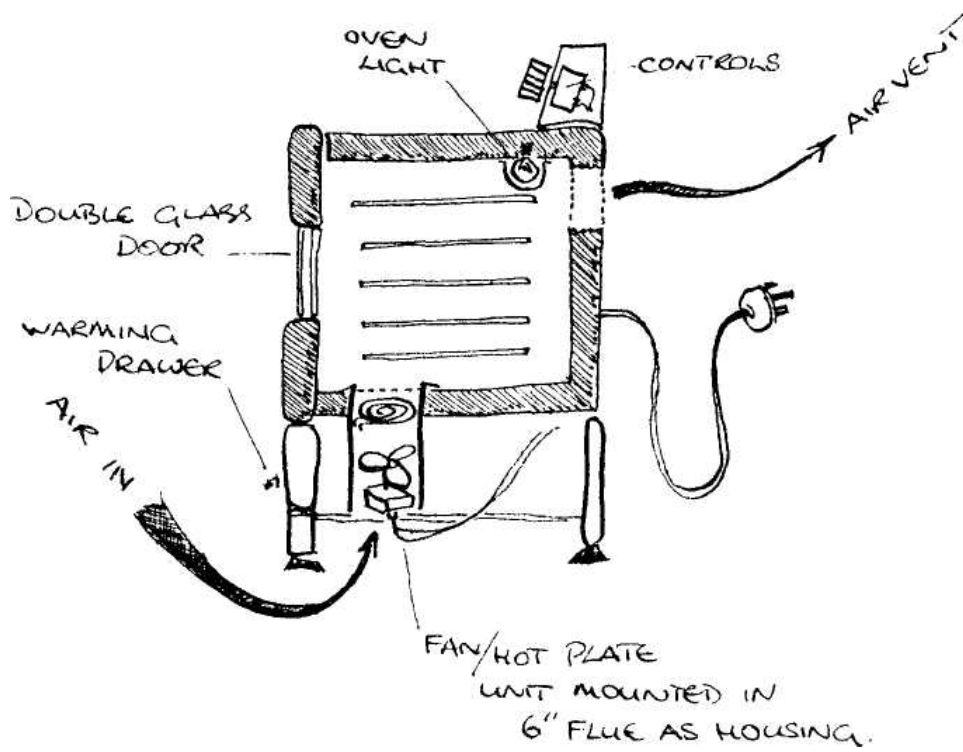
The New Zealand Outdoor Cook Book by Marcelle Pilkington, 1986, pub The Pilkington Family, ISBN 0-9597690-1-3

Food Drying by Phyllis Hobson, 1983, pub by Garden Ways - Vermont. U.S.A. ISBN13: 9780882661551, ISBN10: 0882661558

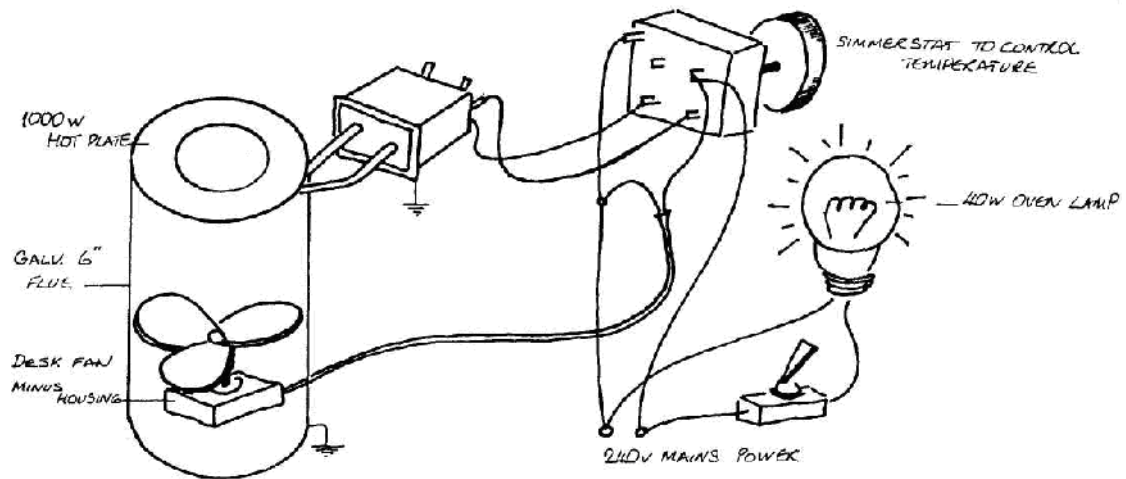
Havest Maid Instruction Book by Hydra Flow Industries - Upper Hutt.

How to Dehydrate Foods - <http://www.drystore.com/page/page/1346972.htm>

How to Dry Fruits and Vegetables - <http://farmgal.tripod.com/Dehydrate.html>



Modified oven



Ventilation and controls

Can't you imagine freshly cooked Dehi Rhubarb added to your billy of custard, or even tangy dried kiwi fruit added to your scroggin ration?