

Northumbria University

‘A Design Pitch’

The George Foreman Grill.

Joanna Morgan (08001873)



CIOD

The Lean Mean Fat Reducing Grilling Machine, commonly referred to as the George Foreman Grill, is an electric grill that aims to cook foods using a more convenient and healthier method. The product claims to tackle: “Health: Reduces fat for a healthier bite!”, “Speed: Up to 3x faster than conventional methods” and “Versatility: Cooks a variety of food from fresh or frozen.” (*Argos Autumn/Winter*, 2009, p.672)

Manufactured by Salton, Inc., the “Lean Mean Fat Reducing Grilling Machine” first made an appearance in 1994 and was invented by Michael Boehm. The specific model that will be used in this instance is the 5 Portion Family Grill, model number 14053. See image below.



According to Grey, (2004, p.167), “the biggest gap in kitchen appliances relates to grilling”. He argues that, “The inadequate infrared elements in ovens are problematic for 3 reasons. First, grilling generates a lot of fumes. It needs to be done fast, under constant supervision since food on the grill can burn easily. It also generates a lot of fat.”

The George Foreman grill addresses all of these issues: the product includes a timer that turns off the grill preventing burning without supervision; cooking time is reduced significantly through simultaneous contact on both sides; and the fat is drained away from the food item.

For the health conscious era whereby “over rather than under nutrition is a major health issue in developed countries”, Marshall (1995, p.9), the design of the George Foreman Grill ensures minimal contact between the food and the surface of the grill. This also allows for unwanted fat or grease to be drained out down the angled and sloped ridges and collected in a ‘drip tray’.

The George Foreman website, Russel Hobbs Limited (2010), claims that “The George Foreman grill helps you dramatically cut down on your fat intake while still being able to eat all your favourite meals.” The product taps into the Zeitgeist: the cultural western perception that unhealthy eating is less tolerated and acceptable, which has been further exemplified with “policy makers and health educators warning the public to reduce fat, sugar and salt intake”, Marshall (1995, p.9). A recent example of this is the nationalised UK government campaign, Change for Life.

Consequently the former heavyweight champion of the world, George Foreman, has endorsed the product since 1999; his personal values are fitting to the brand as he associated his former success to his healthy lifestyle and diet. The famous tagline, "Great tasting healthier foods in minutes", also re-iterates the healthy values of the company.

The patented design (US Pat No 5, 606, 905) eliminates the need to flip the food that is being prepared, reducing cooking time by half; the product simultaneously grills both surfaces. This lessens the energy expenditure used to cook products, saving both energy and money, addressing environmental issues. Furthermore, both the product and user guide indicates that the George Foreman grill should not be disposed of "to avoid environmental and health problems due to hazardous substances...but recovered, reused, or recycled", Russel Hobbs Limited (2010).

A reduction in cooking times is also of benefit to people who may otherwise opt for 'convenience' meals, which are often deemed to be less healthy, due to the time available. Marshall (1995, p.178) suggests that as a result of a change in attitude in the post-industrial world, "the usage of convenience foods reflects a shift in the control over household income, and responsibility for domestic work. Cooking has been deskilled, or transferred out into the commercial sector." He also investigates the shift in the "traditional role assignments" of men and women, and how the role of a housewife has been industrialised by modern technology, Marshall (1995, p.164). This, alongside the social outlook that the kitchen is a signifier of culture and status, and consumers' perceptions surrounding healthy eating, suggests that there is room in the market for a convenient and healthy cooking style such as that presented with the George Foreman Grill. See image, *Housewife Cooking* (1950), to the right.



Conformity also plays a significant role in the use of convenience foods. Marshall (1995, p.158) suggests that, "convenient foods, until recently, were almost exclusively associated with the lower classes. Middle and upper class foods and mealtimes were composed of large amounts of relatively expensive and labour intensive items. Indeed, for many meals, display and conformance to social norms in the form and manner of serving were extremely important. The degree of conformity, and the elaborateness of the rituals involved, varied according to the symbolic significance of the meal." The aesthetics of the 'entertaining grills' range are more elegant, thus maintaining the consumers status whilst using a more convenient method, and cater for up to 10 people.

The George Foreman Grill has been designed in various sizes and styles catering for a wide target market. For example, Salton Inc. manufactures smaller grills for 2-3 portions appealing to "single/couple households in their first home and great for students", Russel Hobbs Limited (2010). This is a more compact and simplistic design, entering the market at a lower price point of £19.99. The company also has a 'Family Grills' range, that "are every parents dream as they help you cook healthier meals for the family in minutes". These are aimed at 4-5 people and are higher cost. This allows for the target market to improve their George Foreman Grill as they get older or come into more money, for example.

The grills all cater for varying thicknesses of food with the incorporation of a “floating hinge” allowing for an optimised variation of food to be evenly cooked. The product also includes an extended rotary handle for ease of use, minimising the movement of the wrist. See images below.



The 2006 advertisement featuring George Foreman features the grill in the foreground of a very simplistic and pure kitchen with a suggestion of foods. Foreman acknowledges the foods replying with comments such as “naturally” and “my speciality”, Steve4871 (2007). By identifying a variety of foods, the advertisement will appeal to a higher number of people and cultures. The advertisement also highlights that the company is also a sponsor of the British Heart Foundation, which is appropriate to the promotion of a healthier brand image and diet.

The official images publicised within their marketing campaigns and website also show the product in context with a variety of foods. For example, salmon, kebabs, burgers and paninis. The company also offers, within their website and user guide, a selection of “Healthy recipes”, Russel Hobbs Limited (2010), further promoting their healthy eating ethos. See image below, Russel Hobbs Limited (2010).



According to (*Argos Autumn/Winter, 2009, p.673*) The 5 Portion Family Grill, is being sold at a price point of £68.49, with a recommended retail price of £69.99. The product is sold in supermarkets and stores such as Sainsbury's, Tesco's and British Home Stores, as well as on the George Foreman website. Grey (2004, p.20) suggests that, “In an industry that has been ruled by ever-decreasing price, as quality is now a major issue where demand is dominated by price. The beacon appliances stand to gain added status as a result”, as

such, this suggests that brand is important with visible icons, such as that of the George Foreman Grill.

All the products look sleek and elegant with soft geometry and simple colours. Though recognisable, the George Foreman grill is not confrontational and will blend well in most kitchens.

Direct competition with the grill includes: The Jackie Chan Grill, The Evander Holyfield Real Deal Grill, and the Carl Lewis Health Grill, none of whom have yet been able to emanate the success of the George Foreman Grill, which dominates the market having sold over one hundred million units worldwide, Russel Hobbs Limited (2010). Moreover, Grey (2004, p.20) states that, "...there is increasingly more demand for the top-end manufacturers to make status symbols for those with the desire for something different and well-made". Efficient and high performance materials are used within the product.

The grill plates on all the models incorporate a non-stick coating, allowing for easier cleaning. Furthering this, in 2006, detachable plates were added to the design making the product easier to clean, further indulging the industrialised target market.

Less obviously, the products competition also includes standard kitchen grills, conventional ovens, and other methods of cooking. However, furthering his argument that there is a gap in the market relating to grilling, Grey (2004, p167) suggests that "...none of this is fulfilled in a conventional oven, and what is worse is that the fat spills onto the sides of the oven walls, so that the next time you use it as a conventional oven, the fat burns off, filling your kitchen with smoke."

To conclude, the product has been a great success and the George Foreman grill is a very popular appliance within the household, having created a healthier cooking alternative and an appropriate brand image.

Reference List

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