

About 5:30 PM there was a loud bang from the oven. Sylvia opened the oven door and the Pyrex dish had shattered into a million pieces. The roast beef (our first in many months) was peppered with small shards of very sharp glass. Normally, I am quick to inform Sylvia she did something stupid. However, this time she was nowhere near the stove when it blew. I shoveled the glass and the now mashed potatoes into a bucket with two putty knives. I then sucked the remains with the shop vac. I let everything cool down and then scrubbed the oven with Simple Green and some hot soapy water. It took over an hour to clean up the goo. Upon completion I ran the oven empty to see if the temperature controller was working OK. I suspected the oven got too hot and the dish simply blew. This was not the case however. The oven came up to temperature and cycled normally. We threw a disgusting frozen pizza in the oven and it cooked OK.

What is going on?

I Googled exploding Pyrex dishes and got ten million hits. Exploding Pyrex is very common.

Here is the story.

A long, long time ago in a country we all know and

love was a company named Corning . They made Pyrex dishes. The material they used is called borosilicate glass. This stuff is indestructible. But like everything else, the Bottom Liners had a great idea: sell the technology to another company. The Chinese discovered that using soda lime glass was almost as good as borosilicate glass and a lot cheaper. Today, Wal-Mart is the largest distributor of Pyrex products. Corning not only sold the technology to a company called World Kitchen, they also sold the rights to the original Pyrex logo. Seamless. The consumer will never know.

Now it seems people are getting hurt using soda lime Pyrex. We were lucky because the dish broke while the oven was closed and the damage was limited to the oven cavity. Others have been less fortunate. Some dishes explode when they are lifted from the heating rack in the oven with devastating results. Some people are heavily scarred. World Kitchen is in denial. They say that the dishes are another brand, not theirs. Contrary to their denials the victims usually have more than one of these dishes and the Pyrex logo is clearly visible.

If you buy a Pyrex dish beware. The label on the front says oven safe, freezer safe, microwave safe. The instructions on the back tell another story. You

cannot move a soda lime Pyrex dish from the freezer to the oven and expect it to survive. The fine print goes on and on about what you are not allowed to do with the Pyrex dish. The fine print has prevented World Kitchen from being sued because they have warned the consumer that their Pyrex dishes are junk from the get go. And they are the same price as the original Corning dishes. What a bunch of losers we all are for buying this crap.

What to do?

If you own borosilicate Pyrex dishes no fear. They have to be more than 25 years old to be sure they are indeed Corning dishes. I am not sure if the old Pyrex dishes have anything stamped in them that indicates they are made by Corning . You may continue to use the soda lime dishes for holding stuff. Just do not attempt to roast or microwave with them as the hazard is very clear.

The reason the soda lime dishes let go is that over time they develop micro-cracks. Once a few micro-cracks are present and once some liquid finds its way into the cracks you have the bomb situation. The liquid is like shoving a crowbar in the dish and pulling it apart. Super heated liquids expand rapidly and it is the super heated liquids that force the soda

lime glass to shatter into tens of thousands of shards.

Since Corning no longer makes Pyrex and Sylvia proudly holds a large collection of the soda lime Pyrex, we decided that one bomb in the kitchen is enough. The Pyrex dishes will go bye-bye in this week's trash. I do not know what we will use for cake and pie dishes going forward. If you have some suggestions we are listening.

I strongly urge you not to use the soda lime Pyrex for the oven, stove top or microwave. The slightest invisible crack is all it takes to have a mess and a possible injury.

As to World Kitchen: avoid them and their cheap dishes. In case you are wondering: World Kitchen is not a USA company.

[Corning still appears to be making some dishes in the USA - Corelle for instance. If anyone has a way to be SURE that their Pyrex is the old stuff made by Corning, please pass that info on to all. I have boiled water in a Pyrex 2 cup pitcher in the microwave, won't be doing that again.]