

November 2012: Noel Burke, Sola Kookas Ltd. Perth, Western Australia who is creating and patenting a number of solar cooker design notes that there is a lot of promise for "low repair" solar cooker designs like box ovens. I have improved on my " Sola Kooka" design that has a patent pending (USA included) and have found that there is not the need in this affluent country of ours, least ways in our cities, for its use. I have found however that there is a good use for 'a part there of' in this instrument. I have applied for patency including the use of solar, fire plus an electrical back up, all in the one appliance. Australia is a country that has a main 'middle class" of a reasonably affluent population, altho there are pockets of poverty, but on the main, we have enough wealth to pay for our cooking needs that are supplied by the conventional means of electricity and gas. Food cooked on fires by open flame are being squashed out of existence by govt regulations and more and more young people are eating out in the many food eateries that are becoming the norm in most of our cities. In the country side, Bottled gas is the preferred source of energy for cooking as its portable. Electricity is the third choice.

The people on the whole here in Oz are spoilt for choice and as such, don't cook as much now at home for their families as the former generations born earlier did. This makes it very hard to convince them that when they do cook at home, using a solar oven is a good idea in many ways. There is absolutely no Government advertising here in Oz or information about cooking with solar, from both State or federal Govts` in this direction at all, and even less by any known Solar oven manufactures. To date, I believe I am the only Solar Oven manufacturer here in Australia. You can buy overseas made models but the Australians who have bought these to use and "tested them", have rejected them as "Gimmicks" and have mostly resorted and fallen back to the quicker option of gas BBQs. This is more so seen in the Cities. I believe its because of small collection areas on these ovens. There is a small "hard core" of committed energy aware types that are my regular customers, and these are doubling in numbers every year thru introductions to their friends and family members. I correspond to other Solar Oven sellers and they speak of a declining interest in their products but I do believe I know why this is happening. I have been making Solar Ovens since 1994 and have kept many records over this time as well as day to day cooking times and temps. I have also listened to the complaints about Solar ovens and the Cooking progress, food delivery times and I believe I have a very good idea why the Western imagination wont use Solar Cooking along side others as their mainstream method till possibly there is a total break down in energy supply and delivery, and as we both know, that is not too far away in the future. However, there is a rising tide of hope that we as Solar purists can cling to. Its in the smaller towns, rather than the big cities here in Australia that we find a weakness in "the system", and I am sure it will be there in these smaller towns right across

the world, as it is in the small villages of Africa. Electric power is now becoming dearer and supply is becoming intermittent, especially during our long hot summer months and gas, because its portable, is becoming even more so.

It's in these smaller towns in Australia, that home cooking is still a family responsibility. There is not the food outlets or supplies of pre-cooked food in these small towns that are available in the cities, so most of these families need energy to cook with and as I say, this energy is getting dearer and being delivered more and more intermittently as electrical poll top fires start and breakages in the power lines of supply happen, as Govts let systems fall into disrepair due to spiraling maintenance costs. Enter the Solar ovens. But not just any oven. For solar cooking to be accepted by the small town cook here in Australia (and I would assume elsewhere in the world) it must be "user friendly", and this is what I have been concentrating on for the last 10 years. The result is "The Sola Kooka".

In the mind of a potential solar oven user, is the thinking "will it deliver what I expect from what I have use of now." Can it compete for speed and volume of food delivery? I say yes, a big collection area can. Here it is now, 2012, and I have found that we humans here in the West are just so energy wasteful that for us to use a Solar Oven, we even have to have "built in waste" or we wont use it. Its ridiculous how we have been conditioned to cheap energy in the past and still feel we need it today. This waste I am talking about is "oven size". If we as Australians must use solar ovens to cook our foods, then they have to be big ones that will cook our food in the same time as the energy hungry ovens do that we might some day replace. Crazy I know Tom, but from my experience of every one who has approached me about Solar Ovens/cooking, this is their response. They all seem to want to cook a whole Bullock, inside a chocolate box sized oven, by using no more than a candle for heat, and they want it to only take 15 to 30 minutes to do so. This is what solar oven manufactures are up against when selling to the mainstream westerner. " If Kentucky Fried can do it.".... Even a regular restaurant can deliver a big meal inside of 15-20 mins to your table. (never mind the energy costs to do so) and they ask, " so why cant Solar do the same if it's so good". Sad but true, I hear time again that this is what is stopping this form of cooking from taking hold here, and I would bet on the same thing also happening around the world. For Solar Cooking to take hold in the Western cities across the world.... My advice to all of the world's manufacturers is to start at the country towns first, and then work into the cities. And this is what I meant by that flicker of hope, from Country towns. I have tried for years to keep a business going with Solar ovens and It is happening, but is still "seasonal" in the fact that come Winter, the phone calls stop and I am very sure that this happens to many others here and around the modern western world who wish to see more users of their Solar Ovens. Poor countries are in a totally different position to those who live the modern western suburbia lifestyle. They are energy poor and so can

" see" the benefits of solar cooking and do so with out reference to time. They KNOW what their energy costs are. City folk here don't. To us lot its just an inconvenient flick of a switch and its instant heat. So on listening to folks advice who say "to get them to use one" the first requirement is not what they can cook, not how much money they can save and certainly not because they might be saving on pollution, its ***how fast can they deliver the food and how much food is delivered in that time frame***. So small "passive" black plate ovens just don't cut it. Plain speaking they take too long to deliver compared to the present energy guzzling stoves and burners.

Why I say I would start with country folk. Because I have done that with great results, as country folk have to disconnect their gas bottles, take a trip to town, Fill it or swap it. And connect it all up again to use. Either way its money and time to do this. Quite a lot of them tell me they already fill their thermos flasks with the left over hot water after boiling the kettles for a hot drink, so most live away from easy access to amenities and know how prudent it is to conserve things, including energy. Also the "word of mouth" is great in "the bush" here and flows quickly.

I now have a web site. Solakookas.com.au...(or find me at. Sola Kookas Ltd .. Both on the net.) And this "solar season" (now started here in Oz) should be better this year than most I have had. A small advert in their local papers is starting to reap rewards with "hits" to the site that tells them what is now available to use just the sun to cook with. You are welcome to reference this site too and all the pix are and may be referenced to me as such, if reproducing them is needed.

I deliberately haven't sold any of the "total" Sola Kooka, that is, the one with the fire and electric back up. There is a reason I haven't done this. The regular sized Solar Oven (750mm wide) works at a min of 150c temperature in the cooking chamber over any winter day so long as it's fine. Because of its design, it can be made wider, so increasing its collection area hugely, without changing anything. Larger sizes, like making it 1200mm wide (four foot) with the corresponding reflectors at that size, make Solar Cooking more acceptable to those who live in less sunlight zones as they certainly get a lot hotter than the small box cookers we see being used world wide to date.

This regular sized Solar Oven gets to 200c- 212c on fine summer days and this is the temperature that the average person expects to use and cook with. It's that greedy waste they want from solar energy and this is now available all on a nice trolley etc and being so "User friendly", it's being noticed. A good thing for Solar cooking all-round hopefully.