

HandyMitts Apron in The Times

**KITCHEN
CONFIDENTIAL**

Wild gloves for safe cooks

Keith Steptoe can't remember whether his mother sewed his mitts on to elastic and threaded them through his anorak when he was a boy. The explanation for his ingenious invention, the HandyMitt apron with retractable oven gloves, is far more prosaic, although the end result is undoubtedly an upmarket take on childhood practicality.

Steptoe, who loves cooking roast dinners, used to lose his gloves often among the pots and pans strewn about his kitchen on a Sunday. His answer was to attach the oven gloves to his apron at hip height using ski lift pass-style gadgets that allow the mitts to be pulled out as little or as far as needed.

"I had a flash of inspiration and thought that if the oven glove was attached to my side I wouldn't lose it," he says.

He set about cutting up oven gloves and attaching them using retractable key



Carol Lewis in a HandyMitt apron, now available in trendy leopard print

chains. After a series of trials he perfected the design, gained his patent and began selling his British-made cotton aprons here and abroad.

If you don't like the idea of tying your gloves to your apron, however, another British inventor has the answer, Gloven. Nola Baldwin, the inventor of Gloven Oven

Gloves, loves cooking but found that she was repeatedly burning herself. "I had some quite bad burns, especially as a teenager when I worked in a fast-food restaurant." So she set about designing a pair of heat-proof gloves.

"I wanted a glove that was heat-proof but thinner than usual, with fingers, which enables you to actually grab things. I tested quite a few fabrics but had some disasters, including one that melted on my hands," she says.

The fabric that she settled on is Nomex, used in Formula One driving suits and firefighting equipment. It can withstand temperatures between -10C and 250C. And now she has produced a new version: the glove with silicon-tipped fingers for "less slip and more grip".

● HandyMitt Aprons cost £29.95 each, 0118-988 3439 or handymitts.co.uk; Gloven cost £28.99 a pair, 0800 7797051 or gloven.co.uk

Carol Lewis

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER PAUL ROBERTS

The Times "Bricks & Mortar" Section - Friday 21st Oct 2011