MY VIEW FROM THE THIRD ACT

Nuking Your Food

By Darren Somsen, Founder & CEO · Third Act USA, Inc.



Who remembers when ramen became a household staple? Not the "pour water in a cup and wait" kind. This is where you actually had to pull out a saucepan, boil the water (not too much, just the right amount because it was going to make the sauce), wait the requisite four minutes, add the spice packet, stir, and immediately burn your mouth because you were so damn hungry you shoveled it in before it was ready.

And then, microwaves. The Litton. The Amana Radarange.

The first person in your neighborhood who got one—it was all oohs and ahhs. Stale cookie? "I'll nuke it for 15 seconds, and ooh, it'll be fresh again." This was before there was even microwave popcorn. That appliance was going to change every kitchen in every house in the United States. And we were there.

> *But the smell is the same. It's just the journey of how we got there that's different.*

We remember when our parents brought home that first beast, cleared space on the counter, disrupted the kitchen, and we all couldn't wait to cook something with it. Hell, in junior high, the home economics class I took (which was referred to as "Foods" by that point, because we didn't sew—we learned etiquette and how to work our way around a kitchen) had a new lab with a microwave at every station. Half the recipes we were taught utilized a microwave. Cookies, brownies—oh, the world was open to us. We wondered how we could make coq au vin in the microwave, but only because we had heard Samantha on *Bewitched* talk about making coq au vin.

It was a revolution. It was going to change the world. It was going to save us time. But what about the radiation? "Don't open it too fast, the radiation will leak out." "Don't stand too close, you'll get cancer." Oh, it was amazing. You could boil a cup of water in two minutes, depending on how many watts your microwave was and whether your parents bought a brand name or a cheap knockoff.

We were there. That was us. We were the generation whose home was expected to have a microwave. It went from sitting on the counter to, in new builds, being mounted right above the range.

We were the generation that made popcorn in a pan on the stove, and you had to do it exactly right or you'd burn it and the entire house would stink. This generation only knows that smell because they left their bag of Orville Redenbacher's in the microwave too long. But

© 2026 Third Act USA, Inc.

the smell is the same. It's just the journey of how we got there that's different.

But now we're being told that microwaves are out. I remember learning the microwave wasn't dangerous; it just excited radio waves to a frequency that would vibrate the moisture molecules in your food, creating heat inside that delectable popcorn kernel.

Now, a new batch of "amazing, marvelous, incredible" appliances has moved from being something Ron Popeil would have presented on an infomercial in the '70s and '80s to something we just pick up off the shelf at Costco. They call it an air fryer. It's just a modified convection oven. We're sold a "magic pot," which is just a self-contained pressure cooker.

It's not different. It's just repackaged technology for a new generation.

We're not that new generation, but we embrace it anyway. We're the generation who learned to cook on a stove. We were taught recipes we could make in a microwave. And now, every single one of us has an air fryer sitting on our countertop that essentially replaced the toaster oven (which, if we spent the extra money, had a convection function in it anyway).

And here we are, still making popcorn in the microwave.

And that's my view from the Third Act.

◆



MY VIEW FROM THE THIRD ACT · THE COMPLETE COLUMN

Part One
A Senior's Manifesto

Part Two
Giving the Finger to the Senior's Angie's List

Part Three
Deadhead Sticker on a Cadillac

Part Four · you are here
Nuking Your Food

Part Five
Grab the Stick

Darren Somsen is Founder & CEO of Third Act USA, Inc., in Melbourne, Florida.

© 2026 Third Act USA, Inc. All rights reserved. Written by Darren Somsen. Reprints or redistribution require written permission. Please credit Third Act USA and the author when quoting.

Read all five parts at **thirdactusa.com/view**
Founder portrait is AI-generated from current reference photographs.