



Contact:  
**Blaine Bill**  
OEM Sales Manager  
Phone: 608-524-4341 x116  
Fax: 608-524-4342  
[bbill@hankscraft.com](mailto:bbill@hankscraft.com)  
[www.hankscraftoem.com](http://www.hankscraftoem.com)

## **Better Ice. Better Price. New trends in energy saving ice makers are paving the way for cost reduction and efficiency.**

*By Blaine Bill*

Since the 1980's, household refrigerator ice makers have traditionally been the same - an aluminum tray is automatically filled with water and when it's frozen solid, a motor heats up the tray to eject the ice into a holding bin. This process can create a staggering increase in the overall energy consumption of the refrigerator, in some cases up to 20% or more depending on the configuration, which can make a significant dent in consumers' pocket books. In addition, the motor also warms the entire freezer box, causing food to be slightly thawed and re-frozen throughout the day, affecting food quality over time.

Appliance manufacturers and suppliers are growing increasingly aware of the need for low-energy alternatives to traditional ice makers. To combat this problem, a new spin on an old concept has entered the market. Known as "flex tray" or "twist tray" ice makers, these units do not require heat to release the ice into the bin. Instead, the trays twist to release the ice cubes, keeping the freezer at a more stable temperature since it does not need to heat and re-cool during each ice harvest.

Flex tray ice makers are not new to the industry. They were widely used in the 1970's, but due to reliability issues at the time, they were replaced with the compact, heated ice makers we see today. While many advancements have been made to the flex tray design, such as improved plastics and mechanics, they require electronic components within the refrigerator to function. Because of this, flex tray units have historically been compatible with high-end appliances only, limiting accessibility for the average consumer.

One manufacturer taking a proactive approach in this realm is Hankscraft, Inc. They have developed a new flex tray design with the circuitry located within the ice maker itself, no longer requiring logic from the refrigerator's circuit board to function. This "brain box" handles all of the functions of the ice maker, allowing it to be easily installed in lower-end models or retrofitted into older models. The PCB has an adjustable water fill switch which allows the appliance manufacturer to regulate fill times in .2 second increments ranging between 4.5 to 7.5 seconds. The brain box can also be removed so the tray can be connected to existing smart refrigerator circuit boards, giving the unit greater installation flexibility. This ice tray operates independently with either 120v or 230v line voltage, making it the lowest energy automatic ice maker available today. Preliminary testing projects energy usage of .64 kilowatt hours annually vs. 85.5 kilowatt hours annually for a traditional heater-style ice maker - a remarkable drop in energy usage. The unit also allows for an additional 1" of clearance in the freezer box, adding to overall storage capacity.

As time moves forward, we will continue to see innovations in the appliance market that will be both energy saving and highly compatible. These improvements will create lasting savings and reliability, resulting in greater consumer confidence in the industry.