

**THE
MICRO
WAY
LANI
BLOOMER**



Microwave cooking is easy, once you understand the basic differences between microwave and conventional cooking. One of the most important "basic" microwave techniques is that foods cooked in a microwave require a period of standing time for the food to finish cooking.

Standing time means letting the food rest for some time, after microwaving, before it is cut up or served. Many beginning microwave cooks have trouble with standing time because they don't understand what happens to their food during this time.

Standing time is needed because microwaves cook food from the outside in to the center. (This is contrary to a popular myth that food cooks from the inside out.) The outside edges of the food cook first and very rapidly. Standing

time allows the middle of the food to "catch up" with the edges.

While the food stands, heat from the edges of the food moves into the middle to finish cooking the center. In large dense foods, like roasts or turkeys, the microwaves cannot reach the center. The center of a roast cooks by conduction, or the heat moving in from the edges, just as in your range oven.

The amount of standing time a food needs depends on its size. The larger and denser the food pieces, the longer it takes the heat to reach the center. Some average standing times for common foods are shown in the accompanying chart.

Standing time is most important when you cook food on high power, because the edges are cooked so quickly. But even at the lower power levels, standing time lets the temperatures even out in the

food, and gives flavors time to develop more fully

The most important thing to understand about standing time is that food continues to cook during standing time. For this reason some cookbooks call standing time "carry-over cooking." If you cook food in the microwave until it is "done" by conventional cooking standards, the food will be overcooked by the time you sit down to eat it! (This is why those biscuits you microwaved tasted delicious when you sampled one when they first came out, but were rocks when you served them at the table a few minutes later!)

You need to revise your doneness tests for microwaved foods to allow for this extra countertop cooking. For instance, baked potatoes should still be a little firm after microwaving. They will get thoroughly soft after the standing time.

Have you ever eaten potatoes without letting them stand? I bet they had soft spots, and hard, less cooked spots in them. They didn't need more cooking, just 5-10 minutes of standing time!

A cake baked in the microwave is "done" when it still has damp, shiny spots on top. These will finish cooking and dry up during standing time. You wouldn't take a cake out of your range if it was still damp and shiny on top. If you microwave a cake until it is

thoroughly dry on top, it will probably be dried out (overcooked) along the edges and corners.

You should check your food to see if it is done after the standing time. This is particularly important with roasts. The temperature inside a roast will increase one or two degrees each minute for up to fifteen minutes, as the center continues to cook

If you like well done meat, it will be hard for you to let a roast stand when there is red juice coming out of it. You will probably want to microwave it more right away. Don't do it! Let it stand, because the red juice is coming from the center where the microwaves may not reach. The center will finish cooking during the standing time. If your food is not done when you check it after cooking time, you can cook it longer then.

During standing time your food can remain in the microwave if it's turned off. Or, if you need the microwave to cook additional food, the cooked food can stand on your counter. Cover it with a lid, foil or towel to keep warm. Wrapping baked potatoes in a terry towel is the best way to keep them hot while they stand five minutes. The towel lets steam escape, so the potatoes don't get soggy, like they do in foil.

Many people get "nervous"

about letting cooked food sit around on the counter. Just remember, during standing time the food is still cooking, and won't cool down if it's covered. If the food sits around longer than the standing time, it will start to cool down then. It can be reheated briefly, if necessary, before serving.

When you have several foods to microwave for a meal, cook food with the longest cooking and standing time first. Cook the food that cools down fastest, or has the shortest standing time last. This way, all the food is hot and ready to serve at the same time, even though it came out of the microwave at different times.

For instance, to microwave scrambled eggs and bacon for breakfast, cook the eggs first. Then let them stand while you cook the bacon. Both will be hot enough to serve when the bacon is done. If you cook the bacon first, as you would on the range, it would be cold by the time the eggs were cooked.

Standing time is the biggest difference between conventional and microwave cooking. Since beginning microwave cooks are not aware of the extent to which their food and will cook after being removed from the oven, many overcook their food. Overcooked foods are dry, hard, rubbery, or have hard spots on them. Food cooked properly in a microwave is soft, juicy and moist.

If you are getting dry or hard food from your microwave, it has been overcooked. Cook it less and let it stand!

FOOD TYPES	STANDING TIME
Scrambled eggs, muffins, hamburgers, fish fillets	1-2 minutes
Vegetables, baked potatoes, chicken pieces, bar cookies	5 minutes
Casseroles, smaller roasts, whole chickens, cakes, pies	10 minutes
Turkeys, big roasts, hams	15 minutes

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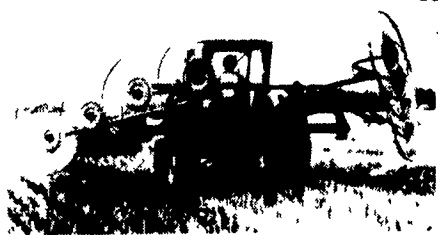
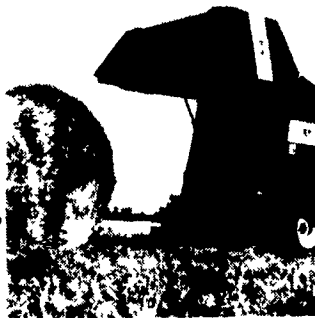
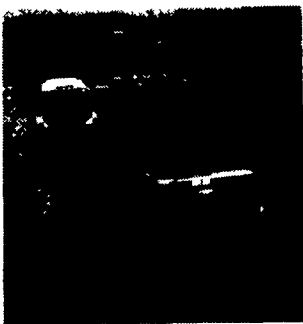
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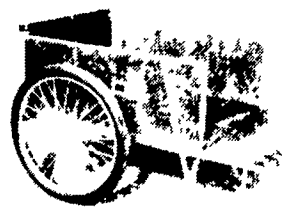
conducts food program

LEBANON — Cedar Crest FFA members Brian Boyer, Becky Smith, Jenny Embich, Brian Fulk, Lisa Houser, Ann Lansberry, Tonya Johnson, Chris Hartlieb, Nathan Arnold and Jon Boyer, conducted this year's Food For America Program.

The program was presented to the third grade elementary schools of the Cornwall-Lebanon School District. The purpose of the program was to teach the students where the food they eat comes from. The FFA members used live farm animals, a large model cheeseburger, and coloring books to help the students learn. Animals included a dairy cow and calf, a pig, a sheep, a rabbit, steer and a pony.

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