



Cooking Pork in Your Microwave

Pork is one of the hardest foods to learn to cook in a microwave. When it's microwaved properly, however, it's deliciously moist, tender, and juicy. Since pork must be thoroughly cooked to be safe to eat, the microwaves tend to dry out and toughen the edges before the center cooks, if you are not careful.

The key to cooking pork in a microwave is to use a very low power setting. If your microwave has only high power, you should cook pork on your range. However, if your microwave has 30 percent power (low, 30, 3 or defrost), you can microwave delicious pork meals.

Pork should be cooked on 30 percent power for 20 to 21 minutes per pound. This is slow by microwave standards—it will take

an hour to cook three pounds of meat. But this is still faster than your range for most cuts, and your microwave uses less energy to run than a range oven.

Pork should be covered during microwaving with plastic wrap, waxed paper, an oven cooking bag, or a casserole lid. Which covering you use depends on the cut and type of results you want. For roasts, an oven bag or covered microwave roaster should be used. For ribs and chops, plastic wrap or a casserole lid will give you a moister, tenderer piece of meat; waxed paper will give you slightly drier, chewier meat.

Use these directions for cooking pork in a microwave and for adapting your own favorite pork recipes:

Fresh Pork Roasts:

1. Rub roast with garlic. Mix 1

tablespoon microwave browning agent with 1 tablespoon liquid such as juice or water. Brush over roast. Sprinkle outside with pepper, salt, thyme. Insert temperature probe into the end or side of roast, so tip is in the center, not touching fat or bone. Put roast upside down in an oven cooking bag, and set bag in a flat casserole pan. (Or use a covered microwave roaster.)

2. Fasten oven bag loosely around the probe wire, leaving at least a half-inch opening for steam to escape. Tie bag with a plastic fastener, or a strip cut from the end of the bag. Do not use a metal twist tie.

3. Put roast in oven and plug in probe. Set oven for probe temperature of 100 to 115°F. and set power level for low (30, 3, defrost).

4. When oven stops, turn roast over (bag, juices and all) in the dish. Plug probe back in, set probe temperature for 170°F. and reset oven for low power.

5. When oven stops, remove roast from bag and cover with foil. Let stand for 10 minutes; use juices in bag for gravy.

TIP: If your oven doesn't have a temperature probe, figure the cooking time at 21 minutes per pound. Cook the roast upside down for half the time on 30 percent power, in an oven bag as described above. Turn roast right side up and cook for the remaining time. Let

stand, then test for doneness.

To cook roast on bed of sauerkraut or with other ingredients, put food in flat dish, and use a turkey size oven bag. Put bag around outside of dish.

Barbecued Ribs:

Use either spare ribs or the meatier country style ribs for finger-lickin'-good results.

1. Arrange the ribs in one layer in a flat pan or casserole, with the biggest pieces around the outside. Sprinkle with onion, lemon slices, seasonings, etc. as desired. Cover with waxed paper or plastic wrap and cook for 10 minutes per pound on low (30, 3, defrost).

2. When oven stops, drain off fat and some of juice. Rearrange ribs, putting least cooked ones to outside and corners. Brush with your favorite barbecue sauce and recover. Cook for 10-11 minutes per pound on low (30, 3, defrost). Let stand five minutes, then test for doneness.

TIP: For soft, falling-off-the-bone ribs, cover with plastic wrap, and leave more juice in the pan. For chewy, drier ribs, cover with waxed paper, and drain off most of the juice before brushing with barbecue sauce.

Pork Chops:

For fried pork chops, use a microwave browning grill (a frying pan for your microwave), and follow the manufacturer's

directions. Some people in my microwave classes have reported good results with these. But I have never been satisfied with chops microwaved this way. The chops get too dried out when I follow the directions for my grill.

Pork chops can be microwaved in a casserole, with other ingredients with good results. Brown chops on the range first, or brush with a microwave browning agent.

If you have a pyroceramic frying pan, brown the chops in this, add ingredients, cover and transfer to the microwave to simmer. A pyroceramic pan is a "glass" frying pan. These are safe on a range burner and also in a microwave.

If you like cooked apples, try this rice and pork casserole. It's good with a tossed salad.

Pork Apple Casserole

2 cups apple juice
1 small onion
1 stalk celery
2 apples
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon thyme
1 cup regular, uncooked rice
1 1/2 pounds pork chops (4-6 chops)

1. Put apple juice in a 2-cup measure heat on high for 6 minutes, until boiling. Chop onion and celery; peel and chop apples.

2. Combine onion, celery and butter in an 8x10-inch flat casserole. Microwave on high for 4 minutes, stirring after 2 minutes, until tender. Stir in salt, rice and apples, and spread evenly in dish.

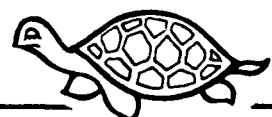
3. Brown chops on stove or brush with 1 teaspoon browning agent mixed with 1 teaspoon apple juice. Arrange chops on top of rice, with meatiest part of chops to outside of dish. Pour hot juice over all, and sprinkle with thyme. Cover with plastic wrap, or casserole lid.

4. Microwave on high for 2 minutes. Then cook on low (30, 3, defrost) for 30 minutes until the juice is absorbed and the chops and rice tender. Serves 4-6.

NOTE: The cooking times above are for microwaves with 600-700 watts of power. For 500-600 W, add 10 seconds to each minute; for 400-500 W, add 20 seconds.

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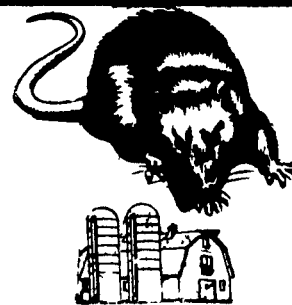
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