

THE MICRO WAY LANI BLOOMER



Microwaving Winter Vegetables

Vegetables are fantastic when they're cooked in a microwave. They are picture perfect in color, high in vitamins, delicious and very quick and easy to cook.

So easy and fast that a lady in one of my microwave classes said she and her husband had cooked and eaten 10 pounds of baked potatoes the first week they'd had their microwave!

If you're new to microwaving, here are a few hints for cooking your greens. Most vegetables are steamed in the microwave, so use high power, with very little water. I use just enough water to barely cover the bottom of my container about two to four tablespoons.

A tight fitting cover is important, to contain the steam. Plastic wrap can be used to cover a serving dish that has no lid. If your plastic wrap melts (from the heat the steam rising in the container) switch brands. Heavy duty plastic wraps and microwave plastic wraps are made of a different plastic that has a higher melting point than cheaper brands.

When you cover a container with plastic wrap, "vent" (leave open a

little) one corner of the container. This permits excess steam to escape so the plastic doesn't blow up like a balloon and burst.

Remove covers carefully on vegetables, the steam can give your hands or face a bad burn. Open lids away from you, and keep your fingers clear of the escaping steam.

Don't sprinkle salt on your vegetables before microwaving. Root vegetables will be dehydrated by the salt, making them tough. Other vegetables may get burned spots where the salt lands.

Drain the liquid from the container and season vegetables after the microwave time, but before the vegetables' standing time.

Speaking of standing time, this is a short time of "carry-over cooking" that occurs after foods are microwaved. Vegetables usually need four or five minutes of standing time, and become much more tender during this time.

Don't try to cook the vegetables until they are tender. Microwave them for the times given in your directions, then let them sit, covered, on your counter for a few minutes before dishing them out.

Wrap baked potatoes in a small terry towel during standing time. This keeps them piping hot yet lets the steam escape so they don't get soggy.

How long should you cook vegetables? This depends on your microwave and the type of vegetable. The best guide for you is the cooking charts in your oven's cookbook. For commercially frozen vegetables, most packages have cooking times on the package. Canned vegetables should be drained before warming, unless you plan to serve the liquid with the vegetable.

Fresh vegetables can be weighed and cooked on high for 6 to 7 minutes per pound. Pierce the skin on potatoes and squash if they are to be cooked whole. If slicing or cutting vegetables, try to make uniformly sized pieces.

Arrange the vegetables in your container with the tough stems or with larger pieces on the outside corners. If the pieces are the same size, stir once during the cooking time for even cooking.

Cabbage and carrots are two fresh vegetables that are inexpensive and readily available in winter. These two recipes are easy and delicious.

Honey Glazed Carrots

6 carrots (about 1 pound)
2 tablespoons water
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 tablespoon honey
1/4 teaspoon salt

1 Scrape and slice carrots diagonally into 1/4-inch slices. Put in a one-quart casserole with water, cover.

2 Microwave on high for 7 to 8 minutes, stirring after 4 minutes, until almost tender.

3 Drain. Stir in butter, honey and salt, stirring until the butter melts and the carrots are well coated. Leave uncovered and microwave on high for 4 minutes until the carrots are glazed.

4 Cover and let stand for 5 minutes until the carrots are fully tender. Serves 4.

TIP:

--Recipe may be cut in half. Cut ingredients and cooking times in half, but still let stand 5 minutes.

--For a gourmet vegetable, Ginger Glazed Carrots, stir in 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger with the butter and honey.

Red Cabbage and Apples is delicious with pork, and a nice change from sauerkraut. This recipe reheats well and the flavor improves by cooking the day before, refrigerating and reheating.

Red Cabbage and Apples

Onion chopped
3 tablespoons butter or margarine
1 head red cabbage, shredded (about 1 pound)
1/2 teaspoon salt

3 large tart apples, peeled and chopped
2 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons cider vinegar

1 Combine onion and butter in a 3-quart casserole. Cover and microwave on high for 3 minutes, stirring halfway through, until the onion is almost tender.

2 Stir in cabbage and salt. Cover and microwave on high for 10 minutes, stirring once halfway through.

3 Stir in apples and microwave on high for 5 minutes. Combine sugar and vinegar and stir into the cabbage. Recover and microwave on high for 5 minutes longer until cabbage and apples are tender.

4 Let stand covered for 5 to 10 minutes, for the flavor to develop, before serving. Or cool and refrigerate. To reheat, heat on high power, stirring frequently until hot. Serves 8 to 10.

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 to each minute.

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Floriculture research conference planned

ITHACA, NY Cornell University will sponsor a "Commercial Floriculture Research Conference" March 13 to keep leaders of the nation's floriculture industry up to date on the latest research developments at the University.

The one-day event is sponsored by the Interdepartmental Floriculture Program consisting of the departments of floriculture and ornamental horticulture, agricultural engineering, entomology, plant pathology, and agricultural economics in the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell.

Thomas C. Weiler, chairman of the conference and a specialist in florist crops at Cornell, says the conference could attract more than 200 participants from throughout the United States and Canada. The conference is free.

Previously, the conference was called "Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture Open House." Along with the name change, the event will be held in March instead of January. The reason for the change is to avoid holding a major floriculture conference in the middle of a frigid winter when inclement weather often hampers participation, according to Weiler. In addition, many florist crops grown in numerous research projects being conducted by students and faculty will be in better shape for viewing in March.

The plenary session will be held in James Law Auditorium on campus in the morning, featuring a series of talks ranging from crop production systems to marketing trends for florist products. Other topics on the agenda include

computerized environmental control for greenhouse operations, insect and disease problems affecting florist crops, and pesticide regulations.

The afternoon program will take place at the Kenneth Post Bioclimatic Laboratory and its greenhouse complex, where participants will view florist and ornamental crops and discuss research projects involving these crops with faculty, staff, and students.

Projects to be discussed include computer-assisted sensors used for control of environmental conditions in greenhouses, energy conservation devices for greenhouse operations, year-round tomato production, miniature roses grown in pots, garden summer bulbs such as lycoris and colchicum, lily forcing and fertilization trials, rose production systems, studies of carbon dioxide levels and other factors crucial for photosynthesis, root zone-heating, and viral diseases affecting roses.

The New York State Floriculture Industries, a statewide organization representing a cross section of the floriculture industry, will have a special display on its research and development activities.

A special tour of the Mineral Nutrient Analysis Laboratory at Cornell will be conducted starting at 7:30 a.m. The laboratory analyzes soil, foliage, and water samples for the status of mineral nutrients for commercial growers.

For more information about the program, contact Thomas Weiler, Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture, Plant Science Building, Cornell University Ithaca, NY 14850-5908, or call (607) 256-2166.


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