



Microwaving Hams

Easter is early this year, and will be here in just two weeks. Ham, a traditional Easter meat, is easy to microwave with delicious results.

Contrary to popular "knowledge," meats don't get tough and dried out in a microwave—unless you cook them too fast or too long. If you want your ham hot, juicy, tender with a crispy glaze on the fat, you can do this in your microwave, in less than half the time it would take to cook in your range. A 10 to 12 pound ham will take 4 to 5 hours to bake in the oven and about 2½ hours in your microwave.

The important thing to remember, is to turn the power down in a microwave when you are cooking or reheating meats. Precooked hams are no exception. High power will give you burned dried out edges and corners, and tough dry spots on the outside of the meat.

Use medium power (50%, 5) for precooked hams. At this power level, the center gets hot without getting the edges burned or dried out. At higher power levels, the edges are overcooked before the heat has time to warm the middle.

When cooking fresh (uncooked) hams, a medium low power (30%,

3, defrost) is best. This low power level insures that the center of the pork will be cooked through. Fresh hams take 20 to 21 minutes per pound to cook on 30 percent power. Use an oven roasting bag or a covered microwave roaster for fresh hams. Covering the ham tightly makes sure the cooking is even throughout the meat. Leave ham uncovered only during last few minutes when glazing.

Do not cover hams or any other meat with plastic wrap. The heat of the fat as it cooks will melt plastic wrap where it touches the fat. (However, plastic wrap may be used to cover a large container holding meat, as long as the plastic wrap doesn't rest on the meat during cooking.)

The standing time called for in recipes is very important when microwaving meats and roasts. Since roasts are so dense and large, the microwaves may not reach the center of the roast. The center must be cooked by heat being conducted in from the edges. During standing time, heat is conducted to the center of the roast, and cooks it more.

The temperature in the middle of the ham (or any roast) will increase one or two degrees during each minute of standing time. (If you have a regular meat ther-

mometer, put it in your meat and watch it cook on your counter!) So be sure to start cooking your ham early enough to let it stand 10 to 15 minutes before carving it.

If you want your ham glazed, do this at the very end. I prefer to let the roast stand before I glaze it. This way, the glaze is fresh and very hot when the ham is served. Use high power for glazing the roast, so the fat and sugar will caramelize and brown.

If your oven has a temperature probe, use it for heating or cooking your ham. Most microwave cookbooks suggest setting the probe for 120°F. for precooked ham. However, a temperature of about 160°F. is considered serving temperature for food. Ham heated to 120 will be only about 135°F. after the standing time, which may not be hot enough to suit you. I usually set my probe for 130°F. for precooked ham, so it is closer to 160°F. when served.

For fresh hams, set the temperature probe at 165 to 170°F., to make sure the pork is over 170°F. after standing time and will be safe to eat.

A precooked ham takes about 12 to 14 minutes per pound on medium (50) to bake, plus standing and glazing time. For instance, a 10-pound ham would take 120 minutes on medium, 15 minutes to stand, and 4 minutes to glaze, or a total of about 2½ hours to be ready to serve. The detailed directions are below.

Baked, Glazed Ham

Precooked (smoked) ham
Cloves, sliced pineapple, etc. to decorate, as desired

Glaze: ½ cup packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon cornstarch
¼ to ½ teaspoon dry mustard, to taste

½ cup fruit juice, such as apple, pineapple, orange, etc.

1. Remove rind from ham, rinse,

pat dry. Put in baking dish upside down (or cut side down). If the ham has a very thin shank end, shield this by covering it with foil. Cover ham with wax paper.

2. Microwave on medium (50, 5) for 7 minutes per pound.

3. Remove shielding and drain fat and juices from the bottom of the dish. Turn the ham right side up. Score fat on top in diamond pattern and decorate with cloves, sliced pineapple, etc.

4. Insert the temperature probe in cut side of ham, into the meatiest center area. The probe tip should not touch fat or bone. Recover ham with wax paper, set probe for 130°F. and microwave on medium (50) until done. If your oven doesn't have a probe, microwave on medium for 5 minutes per pound.

5. When the ham reaches 130°F.

remove from oven and cover with foil. Let stand for 10 minutes for hams under 5 to 6 pounds, or 15 minutes for larger hams. While ham stands, microwave other foods, such as vegetables, etc.

6. Make glaze: Mix sugar, mustard and cornstarch in 2-cup glass measure; stir in juice until smooth. Cook on high for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring once, until the glaze boils and thickens. Spoon over hot ham and cook ham uncovered on high for 3 to 5 minutes to brown the fat and sugar. For very small hams, cut glaze recipe in half.

NOTE: The times above are for microwaves with 600-700 watts of power. If your oven has 500-600 W, add 10 seconds for each minute; if your oven has 400-500 W, add 20 seconds for each minute.

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Equine Symposium scheduled for April

CREAMERY — The 1986 Equine Symposium and Trade Show is scheduled for Saturday, April 5th at the Pittsburgh Convention/Exposition Center. This event features an intensive, day-long program of lectures, trade show and exhibits, stallion index, breed association displays and a horse art contest and show.

Some of the top names in the horse industry will be featured speakers. Hilda Gurney, U.S.A. Olympic Dressage Team rider from Moorepark, CA, will speak on the "Philosophy of Dressage Horses" and share her ideas on training and riding techniques. Troy Green of Houston, TX, will talk on "Training the Western Horse for Youth or Versatility." Randy Luikart, a farrier from

Ashland, Ohio, will cover the topic "Having Your Horse Shod, A Study of Farrier Science."

Other topics will include "Conditioning the Horse" by Dr. Leslie of the Delaware Equine Clinic in Cochranville; "Potomac Horse Fever," by Dr. Palmer of Kennett Square; and "Leg Problems" by Dr. Tyznik of Ohio State University. Dr. Robert Kline, also of Ohio State University, will talk on "Selection of Breeding Stock with a Goal in Mind."

Registration is due by March 21, 1986. For a brochure and details including registration and costs, contact county agent Nancy M. Kadwill at 489-4315 or write Box 20, 1015 Route 113, Creamery, Pa. 19430 and request the information on the Equine Symposium.

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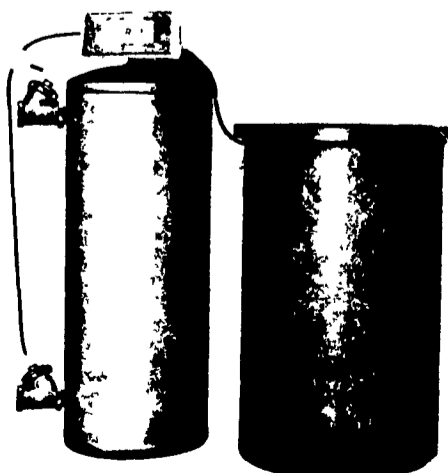


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