

THE MICRO WAY LANI BLOOMER



Microwave Oven Safety

One day when I was demonstrating microwave ovens, a little old lady stopped by my demonstration table. She peered at the microwaves and then at me, and stated,

"You'll never ever get me near one of those things again! Why, about six months ago I looked in one that was running. That radiation got my eyes, and they still aren't right yet!"

Well, no amount of talking on my part could convince her that whatever was wrong with her eyes wasn't from looking in the microwave!

But this story is representative of the many misconceptions people have about microwave oven safety. Let's dispel some of these worries right now!

Radiation

Webster's dictionary defines radiation as sending out energy in the form of waves, such as rays of heat, light, electricity or sound. Without getting into a lot of physics and complex definitions, some radiation is harmful to us and some is not.

Whether the radiation is harmful to people, depends on the wavelength or its frequency. Radiation that is harmful is called "ionizing," and has a very high frequency and very short wavelength. X Rays and gamma rays are examples of ionizing radiation that may damage cells in our bodies.

Non-ionizing radiation includes some light rays and the frequencies used for radar detectors, microwaves, televisions and radios. These lower frequencies have much longer wavelengths, and cannot harm us.

So, even if your microwave should leak some radiation, it will not harm you. As a matter of fact, microwave heaters are currently being tested as a way to warm people in their homes!

Microwave ovens are one of the safest kitchen appliances, according to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. They report that no one has ever been harmed by microwave energy from a microwave oven. Microwave radiation, then, is an imaginary safety problem!

Can I Look In The Window While It's Running?

If you could see a microwave, it would be 4 to 5 inches long and travel in a zig-zag, or wave pattern about as thick as a pencil. This thick zig-zag pattern is why the microwaves can't get past the door seals on your oven, or out those tiny holes in the screen in the door window! So yes, of course you can look in the window.

When Is The Food Safe To Eat?

When microwaves enter food, they cause the food particles to vibrate; the friction of the vibration creates heat.

As soon as microwaves come in contact with the food, their energy is converted to heat and they are gone.

The microwaves are no longer there! Standing time is not needed to let the microwaves get out! And you won't get throat cancer from swallowing the microwaves in your food. They aren't there; just the heat is left! It's safe to eat your food as soon as it's cooked enough — just be careful you don't get burned.

Can I Stir The Food While It's Cooking?

People also want to know if it is safe to open the door while the oven is running. Many are afraid the microwaves will get their hand or metal spoon.

If you try opening the door while the oven is running, you will discover on most ovens that the power is instantly stopped. (Some ovens require you to push the STOP button before the door latch will release). Since microwaves travel at the speed of light, any radiation in the oven when you open the door will be used up

heating the food long before your hand gets into the oven.

So, yes, you can open the door and stir your food. Just as it is perfectly safe to taste the spaghetti sauce for seasoning, just like you might on the range.

Pacemakers

Many people ask about the safety of a microwave with pacemakers. In the early 1970's there was a problem with the "demand" pacemakers, that worked in response to signals from the heart. Occasionally other signals (from automobile ignition systems, some radio or television emissions, or leaky microwave ovens) would interfere with them.

To solve the problem, shielding was developed for the pacemakers. Pacemakers are usually replaced after about seven years, so it is unlikely that any of the unshielded ones are left in use today. Therefore, people with pacemakers can use microwave ovens! If you are in doubt, check with your doctor.

Radiation and pacemakers are imaginary problems with

microwave ovens. There are, however, other safety problems with microwaves that are not imaginary. These are simple, everyday matters of burns, steam vapor, and accidental fires that you encounter with every form of cooking. Watch for The Micro Way next week, for tips to avoid these safety problems.

Quick Tip:

For several years, a dentist at the University of Oklahoma has been using microwaves to sterilize his plastic denture material! Use your microwave to make your kitchen safer by killing bacteria on your dishcloth, sponge, etc. Here's how:

Fill the sponge or dishcloth with warm soapy water and don't wring it out. Set it on a plate (so you can get it out without burning your hand when it's hot). Put it in the microwave and microwave on high for 2 to 3 minutes until steam forms on the window. Just be careful removing it, and don't try to wring it out before it cools!

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Ann Andrews Selected NJ Outstanding FFA Member

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. — Ann Andrews of the Northern Burlington Senior High School FFA Chapter, Columbus, was announced as the February NJ FFA Member of the Month by the state FFA officers.

Ann is currently president of the Northern Burlington Senior FFA chapter. She has been chairman of many committees such as the candy sale, 8th grade orientation, alumni, and farm fair parking committees. Her Supervised Occupational Experience projects have included beef production, dairy farming, tree sapling grading and packaging, ground maintenance, and serving as an Agway store clerk.

Ann's busy schedule also includes participating in FFA teams

and public speaking contests. She placed first in the 1984 State FFA Creed Speaking contest.

Ann comments on her FFA experience, "FFA has helped me build leadership qualities and agricultural skills that I could not learn anywhere else in my school." Ann is now eligible for the Member of the Year award given at the NJ FFA Convention in May.

Edward Evalul, Ann's advisor, also commented, "She has taken advantage of many activities. Ann has always been an enthusiastic, hard working individual."

The FFA and vocational agriculture education program throughout high schools in New Jersey has allowed students like Ann to be exposed to the over 200 careers in agriculture.

York Co. 4-H Baby Beef Club

The York County 4-H Baby Beef Club met Feb. 11 at the 4-H Center. Connie Hoover reported on Farm Show, Cathy Shive reported on

officer's training and Jenny Druck reported on the beef banquet.

Robert Kilgore spoke to the group about giving and caring.

The next meeting will be March 2 at the 4-H Center. The program will be Richard Beck, Jr., a former 4-H member in York County. He is now an associate at the American Angus Hall of Fame in Smithville, Mo. New members and parents are welcome.

Pests Attack Stored Food

MEDIA — Many kinds of cereal products and other grain foods that are stored in the home may become infested with insects. These pests not only destroy food or make it worthless for human consumption; they also become annoying as the adult insects crawl or fly about the house.

Control by carefully examining all susceptible foods and dispose of infested materials. Remove all foods and kitchen utensils from the area to be treated. Wash cabinets and storage spaces with soap and water. Spray or brush on a household solution of pyrethrin, Malathion or Methoxychlor (household formulation only) on all shelves and corners. When completely dry, apply new shelving paper and replace contents. Products that show no evidence of contamination but have been near infested food can be put in a shallow pan and heated to 150° for 20 minutes to kill any stages of insects that may be in them. Purchase foods in small quantities to eliminate long storage periods or place food in glass or metal containers with tight-fitting lids

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