

THE MICRO WAY LANI BLOOMER



Microwaving Potatoes

Explaining how to bake a potato in the microwave is a little like telling you how to hardboil an egg! Why bother? It's easy and everyone knows how.

But does everyone know how to do it right — so you get a perfect potato every time? A perfect microwave baked potato has a firm, dry skin. It is soft all the way through and steaming hot when you cut it open. If your potatoes are wrinkled and shrivelled up, wet and soggy, or full of hard spots,

you'd better read on!

Potatoes are good for you. They are rich in vitamin C, iron, and potassium, and low in sodium. A medium potato has only about 70 calories. It's the toppings you put on that make them fattening. For a lowfat, low calorie topping, add chopped chives, scallions, paprika, curry, etc. to yogurt.

With the barbecue season here, microwave baked potatoes make a quick and easy accompaniment to grilled meats. Here a few tips for getting perfect potatoes every time!

Microwave Baked Potatoes

1. Scrub skin and pierce twice with a fork.
2. Estimate cooking time: 6 to 7 minutes per pound on high power. Weigh the potatoes if you have a kitchen scale. Without a scale, use this guide: 1 pound of potatoes equals 2 large, 3 to 4 medium or 5 to 6 small ones.
3. Place potatoes on floor of oven in a ring, spacing them about 1 inch apart. Microwave on high for half the estimated time.
4. Turn potatoes over and microwave for remaining time. If you are cooking potatoes of different sizes, check them before the end of the cooking time. The smaller ones may be done before the estimated time is up. Remove any small ones as soon as they are done and continue cooking the larger ones.
5. Potatoes are done when they give a little when you squeeze them. Grab a potato with a towel and press. If it gives a little it is done. It should not very soft yet and will still be firm in the center. If you microwave a potato until it feels soft throughout, it will be shrivelled up and dried out on the edges after standing time.
6. Wrap the potatoes in a terry

towel (a hand towel size is good) and let them stand for 5 to 10 minutes. They will continue cooking, and become soft throughout. The terry towel keeps the potatoes piping hot and absorbs moisture, so the skins stay dry.

7. Variations in potatoes' moisture, size, shape, and freshness will affect the cooking time. Check (grab with a towel and squeeze) each potato near the end of the cooking time to be sure.

8. If you like the crispy crunchy skins of oven baked potatoes, you can shorten the range oven time by microwaving the potatoes before baking. Microwave on high for 3 minutes per pound. Then bake in a 400 degree oven for 20 to 30 minutes, until tender.

When you get tired of baked potatoes, here's a delicious potato salad to make with fresh vegetables from the garden.

Garden patch potato salad

- 3 pounds large round white potatoes (6 large)
- 8 ounces sour cream or yogurt
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder or 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon dill weed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 2 medium zucchini, cut in half and thinly sliced
- 2 medium carrots, thinly sliced
- 2 stalks celery, sliced
- 3 scallions, sliced

1. Wash potatoes and prick twice with a fork. Place in microwave 1-inch apart and microwave on high for 10 minutes. Turn potatoes over, and microwave on high for 10 to 11 minutes, until potatoes start to give when squeezed. Let stand in microwave for 5 minutes. Then put potatoes in a large bowl of cold water to cool for about 5 minutes, just until cool enough to handle.

2. While potatoes are cooking, combine sour cream or yogurt with mayonnaise, garlic, dill, salt and pepper in a small mixing bowl.

3. Peel potatoes, cut in half lengthwise and slice. Combine with remaining vegetables in a large mixing bowl, tossing gently to mix. Pour dressing over and mix gently. Chill. Serves 6 to 8. Garnish with lettuce leaves and cherry tomatoes, if desired.

Tips: Adding the dressing to the potatoes while they are still warm allows more of the flavor to penetrate the potato.

— A vinaigrette dressing may be used instead: 1/2 cup vegetable or olive oil, 1/4 cup vinegar or lemon juice, 1 teaspoon sugar (optional), 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper.

— Use these potato microwaving directions for your own favorite potato salad.

NOTE: The times above are for microwaves with 650-700 watts of power. For 500-600 W, add 10-15 seconds to each minute.

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Eastern Berks Dairy Club

The Eastern Berks Dairy Club met in May at the home of Scott Youse. Members learned the proper way to clip 4-H animals.

In June, the club met at the home of Amy and Brian Richard. Members of the group learned to lead animals in showmanship.

The club also has been active in county dairy bowl and dairy judging. In addition, they helped in the Kempton Fair milkshake wagon.

The July meeting will be the club's annual picnic, which will be held this year at the Oley carnival grounds.



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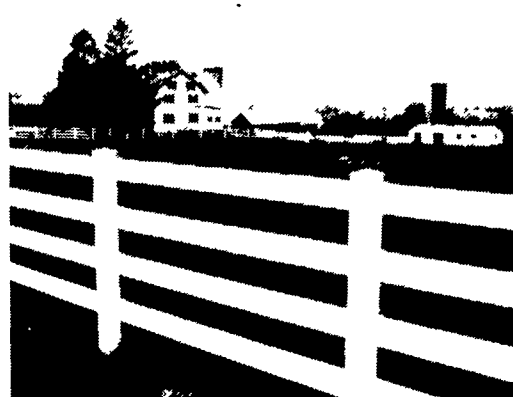
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