

THE MICRO WAY

LANI BLOOMER



Microwaving Baked Beans Saves Energy and Heat in the Kitchen

Several people asked me recently about preparing baked beans in the microwave. Their conventional recipes, heated quickly in the microwave, turned into baked bean soup!

Since there is much less evaporation in a microwave, conventional recipes don't work for QUICK microwave heating. Without the long baking times the sauce is too soupy. You need a special microwave recipe to have quick beans.

However, conventional recipes will work if you leave the beans uncovered and use a low power to microwave the casserole almost as long as you do in the oven! In their cookbook, "Mastering Microwave Cookery," Cone and Snyder

recommend a medium power level for 40-60 minutes for their baked bean casserole.

Your favorite baked bean recipe will probably adapt to microwave heating, but you won't save much time making it in the microwave. You will, however, save in the cost of the electricity (or gas) since a microwave is less expensive to run than a range oven. You will also save heating up your kitchen this summer.

To try your own favorite recipe, combine the ingredients in a microsafe casserole. (Saute onion first alone, as directed in the recipes below.) Microwave on high until boiling, 5-10 minutes depending on quantity. Stir, then reduce the power and microwave on medium low to medium (30,3-50,5) uncovered, for almost

as long as the range recipe suggests. The first time you try adapting a recipe, stir and check it every 15 minutes to see that it does not become too dry.

To adapt a baked bean recipe for quick microwaving, you must use drier ingredients. Substitute tomato paste for ketchup; brown sugar for molasses; dry mustard for prepared mustard, etc. to reduce the soupy sauce. See the Quick Baked Bean recipe below.

Here are two baked bean recipes designed for the microwave, that don't take hours to cook. However, the longer you simmer the beans the better the flavor becomes. Prepare these beans ahead of time, and let the flavor develop in your refrigerator if you want to avoid a long cooking time. (Then reheat, of course!)

Mixed Baked Beans

- 4 slices bacon
- 1 chopped onion
- 1 can (15-16 ounce) kidney beans, drained
- 1 can (15-16 ounce) butter or lima beans, drained
- 2 cans (15-16 ounce each) pork and beans, undrained
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup dark brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard

1. Microwave bacon between paper towels on a large dinner plate until crisp: HIGH POWER FOR 3-4 MINUTES. Crumble three slices together, then crumble last slice separately for topping, set aside.

2. Saute onion in a 2 quart casserole until tender: HIGH POWER FOR 2-4 MINUTES. Stir in remaining ingredients and three slices crumbled bacon. Cover and bring to a boil, stirring every 5 minutes: HIGH POWER FOR 10-15 MINUTES. Sprinkle top with remaining slice crumbled bacon. Reduce power and simmer uncovered to blend flavors and thicken sauce: MEDIUM POWER (50,5) FOR 10-15 MINUTES. Serves 8.

Quick Baked Beans

- 1 slice bacon
- 2 tablespoons chopped onion
- 1 can (16 ounce) pork and beans
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon dry mustard

1. Microwave bacon between a folded paper towel until crispy and brown: HIGH POWER FOR 1-1/2 MINUTES. Crumble.

2. Saute onion in a one quart casserole until tender: HIGH

POWER FOR 1 1/2 -2 MINUTES. Stir in remaining ingredients, leave uncovered, and bring to a boil: HIGH POWER FOR 5-7 MINUTES.

3. Simmer uncovered to blend flavors and thicken sauce: MEDIUM POWER (50,5) for 10-12 MINUTES. Serves 2.

Tips: This recipe can easily be doubled or tripled. Increase time in step 2, until ingredients reach boiling. Time in step 3 remains the same.

— Freeze remaining tomato paste in 1 tablespoon blobs on a waxed paper covered tray. When frozen, peel off and store in freezer container or bag for future use!

Note: Microwave times are approximate since oven speeds vary so greatly. If you have a "fast" microwave, start with the shorter times given in the recipes. If your microwave is "slow," use the longer times or add time if needed.

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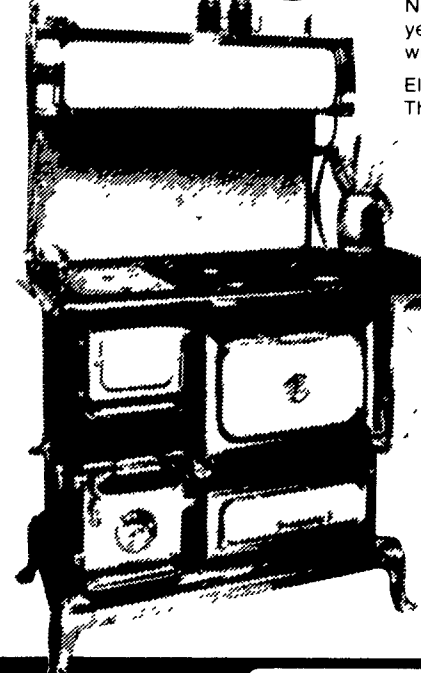
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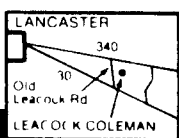


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