



MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

Before you go out and buy all new dishes for your microwave oven, check your cupboards.

You probably have several oven-proof casseroles, which are also fine for microwave cooking. You probably have other standard clear Pyrex or oven-proof glass dishes too - like custard cups and measuring cups, pie plates or round, square and rectangular glass dishes. Most any one of these - as long as it has no metal trim - can be used for microwave cooking.

Check the bottom of each dish for the words "microwave safe." If in doubt about a dish, do the following dish test. Set the empty dish in your microwave. Place a microwave-safe measure filled

with one cup of water alongside it. Microwave on High for one minute. If the dish stays cool and the water gets warm, the dish is microwave-safe and may be used for cooking. If the dish gets barely warm, it is best for just microwave heating. If the dish gets hot, do not use it in your microwave.

A basic list of microwave cooking necessities includes a bacon/meat rack, 1- and 2-quart casseroles with covers, and a couple of Pyrex measures in 1-cup, 2-cup and 4-cup sizes. Also very handy are microwave-safe spoons, a deep 2-quart measure (also called a batter bowl), and a round microwave-safe tray.

If you really cook in your microwave and/or have a large family, you probably will want 3-quart

casseroles with covers. For practicality, choose a deep, dish-shaped casserole rather than a shallow rectangular 3-quart dish (9x13-inch). If you just reheat individual meals or cook for one or two, you'll like the small casseroles, bowls, meat racks and other pieces available now.

If you have a convection/microwave oven, you'll certainly want microwave dishes that can also be used in conventional and convection ovens.

After you've bought the basics you may want to add additional pieces of microwave cookware, depending on your eating and cooking preferences. Browning skillets, popcorn poppers, coffee-makers, pressure cookers, candy and meat thermometers are some of the other equipment you may want.

If you like to cook in big batches and freeze for later, or if you don't like washing dishes, you'll want some "cook and store" containers with tight storage covers that can go from freezer (or refrigerator) to microwave (and conventional/convection oven).

When buying, be sure to read labels. "Cook and store" microwave containers vary greatly. Many of the newer light-weight plastic dishes look and feel the same as some storage-only containers. While most of the new containers can be used in microwave and conventional ovens, some are only for microwave or some parts are only for storage. In most brands the cover is for storage, so it must be loosened for microwave cooking and is not safe for the conventional/convection oven. Most are dishwasher safe, but some covers are top-rack dishwasher safe only.

Before using a new microwave dish or accessory, read directions carefully. For future reference, file directions with your microwave recipes. It's especially important to save directions for browning

skillets, popcorn poppers and other specialized cooking equipment.

With the wide variety of microwave dishes available now, it may be hard to save all labels, so for convenience, I like dishes that have directions printed on the outside bottoms. On the dishes that don't, I write on directions with a freezer marker pen - such as, "not for oven," "cover loosely," "not for fatty-surgay foods," or "cover not for micro." This not only reminds me, but reminds the rest of my microwaving family how to properly use these dishes and covers.

Today's recipes use common cooking dishes that you probably had in your kitchen before you even thought of buying a microwave oven. *Tuna Vegetable Casserole* is cooked quickly in a 2-quart casserole, while *Pineapple Eggnog Pudding* microwaves with little fuss in a glass, heatproof 1-quart measuring cup.

Tuna Vegetable Casserole

- 1 package (7 ounces) 1/2 cups shell macaroni
- 1 1/2 cups frozen California-style vegetables
- 1 can (10 3/4 ounces) condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 can (15-16 ounces) chow mein or Chinese vegetables, drained
- 1 can (6-7 ounces) tuna, drained
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon celery salt
- Salt and pepper (optional)

Fill microwave-safe 2-quart casserole half full of hot tap water. (If desired, add salt). Cover and microwave (High) 6 to 7 minutes or until water boils. Stir in macaroni. Microwave (High), uncovered, 5 to 7 minutes or until macaroni is almost tender. Place frozen vegetables in colander; pour hot macaroni and water over vegetables; drain well. Return macaroni and vegetables to casserole. Stir in remaining ingredients. Cover and microwave (High) 6 to 8 minutes or until hot, stirring once. Season

to taste with salt and pepper. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Each serving - 1/4 of recipe: 303 calories, 20g protein, 8g fat, 38g carbohydrate, 1,005mg sodium, 30mg cholesterol.

Pineapple Eggnog Pudding

- 2-3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 1/2 cups eggnog
- 1 can (8 ounces) crushed pineapple, drained
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla or 1/4 teaspoon vanilla and 1/4 teaspoon rum flavoring

In a microwave-safe 1-quart measure, stir together sugar, cornstarch and spices. Gradually stir in eggnog. Microwave (High), uncovered, 2 minutes. Stir well. Continue microwaving (High) 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 minutes or until mixture starts to boil and is thick. Stir in drained pineapple and vanilla. Pour into 4 dessert dishes. Serve warm or cold. Makes 4 servings.

Variation: Chill pudding and serve over pieces of angel food cake or squares of plain yellow cake.

Each serving: 203 calories, 4g protein, 7g fat, 32g carbohydrate, 53mg sodium, 56mg cholesterol.

Questions for Joyce?

Do you have a question about microwave cooking? Send it to Microwave Minutes, % Extra Newspaper Features, P.O. Box 6118, Rochester, MN 55903. Please include a self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope.

Recipes in this column are tested in 600- and 650-watt microwave ovens. With an oven of different wattage output, timings may need slight adjustment.

Joyce Battcher is an independent home economist microwave specialist. She is author of "Microwave Family Favorites" and editor of "A Batch of Ideas" newsletter.

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Lancaster Farm And Home Scholarships

LANCASTER — One of the objectives of the Lancaster County Farm and Home Foundation is to encourage the higher education of the youth of Lancaster County. In this respect the Foundation is announcing the offering of scholarship awards in 1988 in the fields of Agriculture and Home Economics. Depending upon the financial need and ability of applicants, a maximum of twelve scholarships may be awarded.

Each scholarship award will be in the amount of \$1,000 and may be used to help defray tuition, fees, or room and board expenses at any accredited educational institution, which offers a course of study in Agriculture or Home Economics. The Farm and Home Founda-

tion Scholarships are earnings from an Irrevocable Trust Fund set up by the late Elmer L. Esben-shade, one of the founders of the Lancaster County Farm and Home Foundation.

Scholarship applications are available from Senior Guidance Counselors in all school districts in Lancaster County.

Interested youth are urged to contact their Senior Guidance Counselor for details and an application blank. Additional information is also available from Jay W. Irwin, Chairman of the Scholarship Committee, 1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster, PA 17601 (phone 394-6851). Application forms must be forwarded by April 15, 1988.

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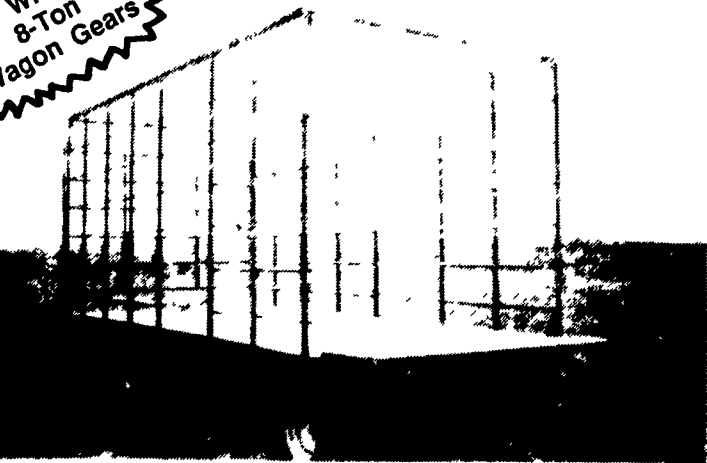
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