



MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

Whether you're celebrating George Washington's birthday, treating a friend on Valentine's Day, or brightening a winter meal, cherries are *the* dessert choice for February. And, your microwave is *the* cooking choice any time to make quick and easy cherry desserts.

Take your choice of today's recipes: A cheerful, light cherry parfait, a nutritious nutty cherry crisp or a quick cherry pie. Each one microwaves in less than 10 minutes.

Cherry-orange pudding layered with whipped topping makes pretty-looking and wonderful-tasting *Cherry Orange Parfaits*. Tart red cherries (sometimes called pie cherries or sour cherries), orange juice and a vanilla pudding mix make up the fruit layer. Juice from the cherries, orange juice and the pudding mix microwave in about five minutes. As with most microwaved puddings or sauces, there's no constant stir-

ring or worry of scorching. Stir twice -- about halfway and three-fourths through cooking -- to prevent a big lump from forming in the dish bottom. Stir in cherries and after cooling, layer the mixture with thawed whipped topping.

Cherries with a whole-wheat flour and oatmeal topping are a homey comforting dessert -- *Cherry Almond Crisp*. Canned cherry pie filling and very short cooking help make this a 15-minute project from start to finish.

The topping combines whole-wheat flour, brown sugar, oatmeal almonds and cinnamon with butter to make a crumb-like mixture. Brown-colored ingredients give the finished dessert a pleasing color. The whole-wheat flour and oatmeal also add extra nutrition and texture. For fastest preparation make the topping in our food processor fitted with the knife blade.

Use either a square or round dish for this dessert. While a round dish is best for most microwave cook-

ing, here a square dish works equally well. The fruit mixture is moist and the whole dessert is relatively thin so during a short standing time (or the time necessary to cool enough for comfortable eating) the corners and center even out in doneness.

Easy Cherry Pie is a delicious one-crust pie. A store-bought pastry crust and a can of cherry pie filling cut preparation time to a couple of minutes. As with any microwave pie, the crust must be cooked first. Brush crust edges with vanilla before microwaving to give a browned "finished" look. Microwave the crust until it looks blistered and no spots look moist. Rotate the dish once or twice if your microwave cooks unevenly. Towards end of cooking watch closely so crust doesn't start to burn. Once the pie filling is added and the crumb topping sprinkled on, microwaving time is only about 6 to 8 minutes.

Cherry Orange Parfaits
 1 can (1 pound) tart red (pie) cherries (*not* cherry pie filling)
 1/2 cup orange juice
 1 regular package (3/4 ounces) vanilla pudding and pie filling mix
 Few drops red food coloring
 1 carton (4 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed

Drain cherries, saving liquid. Combine cherry liquid, orange juice, dry pudding mix and food coloring in a microwave-safe 1-quart measure or bowl. Microwave (High) 4 to 6 minutes or until thick, stirring once or twice. Stir in cherries and cool. Alternate layers of cherry filling and whipped topping in parfait or small clear drinking glasses, ending with a small spoonful of cherry mixture. Chill until ready to serve. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Each serving- 1/6 of recipe: 158 calories, 1g protein, 5g fat, 29g carbohydrate, 94mg sodium, 0 cholesterol.

Hint: To thaw whipped topping, remove cover from carton. Microwave on Medium (50 percent power, 325-350 watts) 1 to 1 1/2 minutes. Stir until completely thawed. If necessary, continue microwaving on Medium at 15-second intervals, stirring after each interval. Thawing time will vary depending on coldness of topping.

Cherry Almond Crisp
 1 can (21 ounces) cherry pie filling
 1/2 cup whole-wheat flour
 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
 3/4 teaspoon cinnamon
 1/2 cup soft butter or margarine

1/2 cup chopped almonds
 1/4 cup oatmeal (not instant)
 Pour filling into microwave-safe 8-inch square or round dish; set aside.

Combine flour, brown sugar and cinnamon in medium bowl. With pastry blender, cut butter into dry ingredients until mixture is crumbly. Stir in almonds and oatmeal. Pour over cherry pie filling. Microwave (High), uncovered, 7 to 9 minutes or until top is bubbly towards center. Rotate dish once or twice if necessary for even cooking. Serve warm or cold. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Each serving- 1/4 of dessert: 248 calories, 3g protein, 11g fat, 38g carbohydrate, 193mg sodium, 23mg cholesterol.

With food processor: Use cold butter, cut into fourths, and whole almonds. With knife blade, using on-off pulses, process flour, brown sugar, cinnamon, whole almonds and cold butter until almonds are chopped and mixture forms coarse crumbs. Stir in oatmeal and continue as above.

Quick Cherry Pie
 9-inch uncooked pastry crust
 Vanilla
 1 can (21 ounces) cherry pie filling

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