



MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

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Convenience, a return to traditional values, and the increasing popularity of the microwave oven have led to the development of many new microwave foods. And, many more are coming.

Fast-food restaurants have been able to meet some peoples' needs for quick inexpensive meals, but what about people who don't have a drive-thru nearby? Or how about the families who have returned to more traditional values of eating at home? (The research firm of Yankelovich Clancy Shulman found that the home is re-establishing itself as the focal point for family activities, including eating. Other researchers have coined the phrase "cocooning" to describe the trend.)

For those people, and for people who don't even have the time to go to a restaurant, many companies have developed high quality foods that microwave in minutes.

In fact, one company, MicroMagic™, offers a whole traditional fast-food menu -- hamburger or cheeseburger, French fries or tator sticks and milkshake. Each item is sold separately in individual (or twin) packets. For a singles meal, microwave the fries in their own box and let them stand to crisp while microwaving a burger. After eating, microwave the milkshake in its disposable cup for 45 seconds and stir to soften it to a thick consistency. It's fast-food meal that goes straight from freezer to microwave and is ready for eating in less than five minutes. Cost is

about \$3.

This past year Geo. A. Hormel introduced three different New Traditions™ hamburger sandwiches. Their success led to two newly introduced New Traditions Microwave Dinner Sandwiches on sesame seed yeast rolls. Each single sandwich microwaves on High for 45 to 60 seconds. (Or, if frozen, it microwaves on Defrost -- 30% power -- for 4 to 5½ minutes.) A microwave chicken dinner sandwich and microwave fillet of fish (topped with cheese) dinner sandwich join the 100% beef burger, cheeseburger and cheese baconburger. Each comes, individually wrapped, in a single serving package.

Make a BLT the Easy Way

With the introduction of Hormel's new Microwave Bacon™, making a BLT at home has never been so easy! You'll have no greasy fingers from struggling to separate slices of bacon, no need for paper towels or a bacon rack and no messy clean-up. All you do is take a package of four strips of bacon from the box, microwave it to desired crispness, remove the bacon and throw away the package.

Microwave Bacon uses Hormel's quality Black Label Brand Bacon, and a special package

developed by 3M. The package top (which looks like plastic wrap) inflates during microwaving and the bottom tray actually broils the bacon and absorbs grease. The result is crisp -- not flat or limp -- bacon.

Microwave Bacon comes four strips to a package, four packages per 12-ounce box. Cooking time is about 2½ to 4½ minutes. Cost is about 75 cents to one dollar more than regular bacon. Hormel Microwave Bacon is also available in a lower-salt version with 35 percent less salt than regular. Right now the "new" bacon is in supermarkets in four U.S. cities, but Hormel expects it to be soon available nationwide.

Serve Salad with a Microwave Sandwich

Fresh vegetable salad adds crispness, nutrition and a homey touch to a fast foods meal. Like a microwave sandwich, today's salad recipes are microwave quick and convenient too.

Either salad may be made and eaten right away or refrigerated for up to one week and served cold. Both use fresh vegetables and store-bought salad dressing. Just a few minutes of microwaving produce tender-crisp carrots that can be served right away, cooled and

eaten at room temperature or refrigerated for later. Salad dressing provides the moisture to cook the carrots. Onion and green pepper is added after cooking for crispness.

In *Creamy Mixed Vegetable Salad* vegetables are microwaved just to slightly blanch them -- not to cook or tenderize at all. This warming allows them to quickly absorb more flavor from the dressing so the salad can be served immediately and yet be flavorful.

Easy Carrot Salad

1 pound carrots, thinly sliced (3-4 cups)

1 cup Western-style salad dressing

1 small onion, thinly sliced or cubed

1 medium green pepper, thinly sliced or cubed

1 tablespoon vinegar

Salt and pepper to taste

Stir together carrots and salad dressing in microwave-safe 2-quart casserole. Cover with lid or plastic wrap. Microwave (High) 4 to 5 minutes, stirring after 2 minutes, or until carrots are still tender-crisp. Cool. Stir in onion, green pepper and vinegar. Chill. Keeps about 1 week in refrigerator. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

To Serve Immediately: Stir in onion, green pepper and vinegar; re-cover and let stand at least 5 minutes (or up to 30 minutes) to slightly soften added vegetables and to allow mixture to flavor through. Refrigerate remaining salad.

Each serving-- ¼ of recipe: 139 calories, 1g protein, 10g fat, 13g carbohydrate, 225mg sodium, 0 cholesterol.

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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