



MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

For holiday parties or family snacking there are many ready-made foods to buy and simply micro-heat. But, there are also many homemade party and snack foods that micro-cook quickly.

Today's first recipe, Lemon Chicken Nibbles With Sweet-Sour Sauce, does take awhile to get ready to microwave, but once the preparation is done, cooking is very fast. To save on preparation time, buy skinned boned chicken breasts. (Or if you're lucky, your supermarket will have them ready-cut into chunks.)

Both chicken and the sauce are cooked on High power. It's necessary to give both some attention during microwaving. Stop microwaving chicken after about two-thirds of cooking time to turn over and rearrange pieces — otherwise some pieces will overcook and some remain undone. For the sauce, stop and stir after each minute of cooking — otherwise a big lump of starch will form.

In Zippy Cheese and Shrimp Dip, cream cheese can be softened on High power, but once the other ingredients are added it's best to use a lower power and stir often. The lower power helps prevent shrimp from toughening and the Cheddar and cream cheeses from curdling.

Both recipes can be made ahead. Several hours ahead, prepare the chicken, coat with crumb mixture and arrange pieces on a microwavable plate. Leave uncooked, cover and refrigerate until cooking time. Add about a minute more cooking time. Or, a day ahead, cut chicken and prepare crumb mixture; cover and

refrigerate each in separate containers until ready to coat chicken. Cook and refrigerate Sweet-Sour Sauce; reheat before serving.

To make Zippy Cheese and Shrimp Dip ahead, soften cream cheeses and stir in remaining ingredients. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. Right before serving, re-heat on Medium power, adding a minute or two of extra time.

Of course, if you really don't want to do a lot of micro-cooking, you could buy some frozen breaded boneless chicken nuggets to heat and serve with the homemade Sweet-Sour Sauce. And you could even buy prepared cheese dip in its own microwavable container!

Chicken Nibbles With Sweet-Sour Sauce

- 1½-pounds chicken breasts (bone-in, skin-on) or ¾ pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 1½ tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ cup chicken broth
- 6 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons soy sauce
- 1½ tablespoons catsup
- 3 tablespoons sugar (optional)
- ¼ cup fine cornflake crumbs
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 2 teaspoons grated fresh lemon peel*
- ¼ teaspoon pepper*
- Green pepper strips

Bone and skin chicken if necessary. Cut into bite-size pieces (about 1 inch each); set aside.

Make sauce in a microwave-safe 1-quart measure. Stir together sugar and cornstarch; gradually stir in chicken broth, vinegar, soy

sauce and catsup until smooth. Microwave (High) 4 to 5 minutes, stirring well after each 1½ minutes, until mixture is thick and boiling. Taste and add more sugar as desired. Set aside.

In a small dish, stir together crumbs, paprika, lemon peel and pepper. Dip chicken pieces in crumb mixture, coating all sides well. Place pieces on a microwave-safe serving plate, arranging larger pieces to outside edges of plate. Cover with waxed paper. Microwave (High) 2 minutes. Turn over pieces and rearrange so least-cooked pieces are to outside edges of plate. Recover and microwave (High) 1 to 2 minutes or until done. If necessary, re-heat sauce. Pour sauce into small bowl; set in center of plate of chicken. Garnish with green pepper strips. Makes about 48 appetizers.

To double recipe: Double ingredients. Divide chicken between 2 microwave-safe plates; cook each separately as above. Prepare sauce in a 2-quart measure, doubling cooking time and stirring after each 2 minutes of cooking.

* You may substitute ¼ tsp. lemon pepper or a no-salt mixture containing lemon and pepper.

Each serving — 4 pieces and 1½ tablespoons sauce: 67 calories, 6g protein, 0 fat, 10g carbohydrate, 105mg sodium, 18mg cholesterol.

Zippy Cheese and Shrimp Dip

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese
 - 8 ounces (2 cups) shredded Cheddar cheese
 - ¼ cup white wine or milk
 - 1 can (6 ounces) baby shrimp, drained
 - 1 jar (2 ounces) chopped pimiento
 - ¼ -½ teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- Place cream cheese in microwave-safe 2-quart casserole; microwave (High) 30 to 45 seconds. Stir until smooth; stir in remaining ingredients. Micro-

wave on Medium (50% power, 325-350 watts) 3 to 4 minutes or until cheese melts, stirring several times. Serve hot with fresh vegetables, crackers or chips.

Hint: Soften cream cheese and stir in remaining ingredients. Divide into several small microwave-safe serving bowls; cover and refrigerate. Re-heat each separately as needed, on Medium, allowing about 2 minutes per cup of cold dip and stirring twice.

Each serving: 31 calories, 2g protein, 2g fat, 0 carbohydrate, 39mg sodium, 11mg 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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Attention: Engaged, Newly Married Couples

YORK — Having a sound financial system in place before or in the beginning of a marriage can save many headaches and heartaches in the future.

You probably have unconsciously developed your feelings about money because of your family's influence, your own personal experience, and what you have read. The same thing is true of your name, so it is very possible that you have come to marriage with "my" feeling and "your" feeling. Now you will want to develop an "our" feeling - if you haven't already.

A series of meetings sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension will be held to help you develop and nurture those feelings about money:

Values Clarification and Goal Setting- February 2, 9:30-11:30 a.m. or 7:00-9:00 p.m., Extension Office Meeting Room, 112 Pleasant Acres Road, York, PA.

Establishing a System for Financial Practices (includes record keeping; saving and spend-

ing control and practices)- February 9, 9:30-11:30 a.m. or 7:00-9:00 p.m., Extension Office Meeting Room, 112 Pleasant Acres Road, York, PA.


Credit, Building Wealth, Protecting Assets- February 16, 9:30-11:30 a.m. or 7:00-9:00 p.m. Extension Office Meeting Room, 112 Pleasant Acres Road, York, PA.

Since each session builds on the previous, plan to attend all three. Cost \$5/couple.

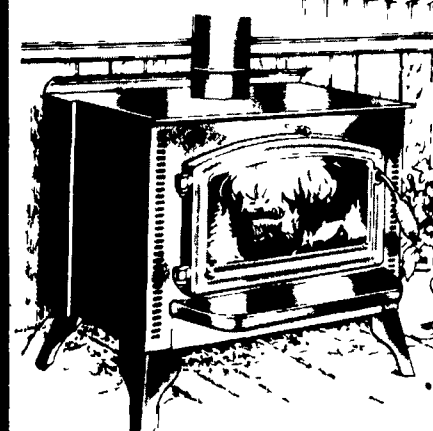
To register for the workshop call 757-9657. Advanced registration is required.



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