



MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

After all the holiday eating, maybe you've decided to lose a few pounds. If so, your microwave is the ideal way to cook a "light" meal.

One of the advantages of low-calorie microwaving is that cooking's so fast, you aren't tempted to snack as you cook! Besides that though, quick microwaving preserves the flavor of many foods, especially vegetables, so you don't need rich sauces to make them taste good. Also, fat can often be omitted, or reduced, in a microwave recipe (exception: micro-baking), because fat isn't necessary to keep foods from sticking to the pan, like in conventional cooking.

To plan a light microwave meal, consider taste, color and texture like you would in conventional cooking. Think of low-calorie ingredients and check your microwave cookbook for recipes that fit.

The main course can be meat when you choose a lean meat and don't overeat. Most nutritionists recommend that three to four-ounce serving of meat two times per day is plenty to get adequate protein, iron and B vitamins. The four-ounce portions in Hamburger Steaks (below) start with lean

ground beef — the kind that contains 77 percent to 81 percent lean. Lean ground beef stays juicier than extra lean, yet has much less fat than regular ground beef. For the least amount of fat, microwave Hamburger Steaks on a microwave meat rack, steaming rack or a special ground meat cooking dish.

Vegetables and starch round out the meal nutrition-wise and help fill you up. A micro-baked potato is moist and tasty when its cooked until barely done, wrapped in foil or covered and allowed to stand to finish cooking. Allow about four minutes on High per medium potato.

Choose a green vegetable — such as broccoli, green beans or brussel sprouts — for the least calories and the most vitamins. Again, for best taste, don't overcook. Add just a small amount of water for cooking; and for extra appeal, add your favorite herb to vegetables during cooking. Brussel Sprouts with Orange uses orange juice instead of water and a dash of thyme for a great taste.

If dessert is a must, choose to micro-bake apples filled with raisins and a tiny bit of sugar, or warm sliced oranges or micro-cook Lower-Calorie Chocolate

pudding (below). This pudding is lower in calories than regular pudding because it's made with skim milk; but it's still rich tasting and nutritious.

To add pizzazz, a low-fat high-flavor topping — like Light Mushroom Topping (below), made with almost-no-calorie-mushrooms — makes a meal extra flavorful and appealing. Sauces also add a specialness to a low-calorie meal. Most can be made lower in calories by using skim milk, reducing amount of fat by half, or using pureed vegetables as thickening.

Today's recipes show that a "light-in-calories" meal doesn't have to be light in heartiness. This filling country-style meal contains only 526 calories per person and is low in fat and cholesterol too. (Calorie count includes a medium micro-baked potato.)

Start by microwaving Lower-Calorie Chocolate Pudding, so it's at serving temperature by the time you're ready to eat. Then microwave Light Mushroom Topping. Next, micro-baked four medium potatoes, according to directions in your manufacturer's cookbook. Wrap each in foil or place in a casserole with tight lid so they finish cooking and stay hot. Microwave Hamburger Steaks. Let them stand covered while microwaving Brussel Sprouts With Orange. Reheat mushroom sauce if necessary. This meal for four is ready in about 30 minutes.

Lower Calorie Chocolate Pudding

6 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
3 tablespoons cornstarch
2 cups skim milk
1 teaspoon vanilla

In a microwave-safe 2-quart casserole or 1½-quart measure, stir together sugar, cocoa and cornstarch. Gradually stir in milk until smooth. Microwave (High) 5 to 6 minutes, stirring after each 2 minutes, until pudding is thick and boiling. Stir in vanilla. Pour into serving dishes. Serve warm or cold. Makes 4 servings.

Each serving: 153 calories, 5g protein, 0 fat, 34g carbohydrate, 64mg sodium, 3mg cholesterol.

Hamburger Steaks With Light

Mushroom Topping
1 pound lean ground beef
Paprika (optional)
Onion powder (optional)
Garlic powder (optional)
Light Mushroom Sauce (below)

Form ground beef into 4 equal patties. Make small indentation in center of each patty. If desired, sprinkle with paprika and onion and/or garlic powder. Place patties in microwave-safe 8-inch round or square dish or microwave bacon/meat rack, arranging patties around sides of dish and leaving center open. Cover with waxed paper. Microwave (High) 2 minutes. Drain and rearrange patties if necessary for even cooking. Microwave 1 to 2 more minutes,

according to desired doneness. Let stand, covered at least 1 minute. Makes 4 servings.

Each steak with ½ cup topping: 264 calories, 23g protein, 16g fat, 4g carbohydrate, 82mg sodium, 74mg cholesterol.

Light Mushroom Topping

1 small onion, thinly sliced
1 clove garlic, minced
½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
8 ounces fresh mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
Salt and freshly grated black pepper

Place onion, garlic and Worcestershire sauce in a microwave-safe 1-quart casserole. Cover with waxed paper. Microwave (High) 1 to 2 minutes or until onion is tender. Stir in mushrooms; season to taste and recover. Microwave (High) 1½ to 2½ minutes or until mushrooms are tender. Serve warm over Hamburger Steaks, baked potatoes or vegetables. Makes about 2 cups.

Each ½ cup serving: 23 calories, 2g protein, 0 fat, 4g carbohydrate, 17mg sodium, 0 cholesterol.

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.

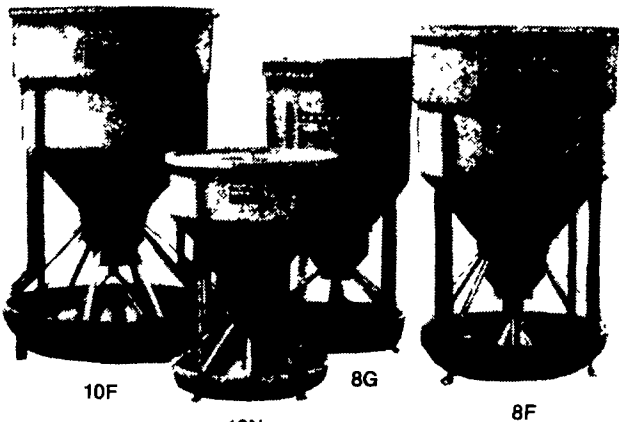
Joyce Battcher is an independent home economist microwave specialist. She is author of "Microwave Family Favorites" and editor of "A Batch of Ideas" newsletter.

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8F	FINISHING	8	30"	52"	40# to 240#	500 10	40	68#
8G	GROWER	8	24"	44"	25# to 125#	325 6.5	40	55#
10N	NURSERY	10	24"	34"	15# to 80#	175 3.5	40	36#
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