

MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

Make your Valentine a luscious chocolate pie in your microwave with one of today's recipes.

Both recipes are very quick and easy. The first calls for melting chocolate for the filling and making a chocolate crumb crust. In the second, Hershey's Syrup Pie, the chocolate filling is cooked and then poured into a micro-baked pastry crust. Both fillings could be served in dessert dishes as chocolate mousse or pudding, or layered with whipped cream and chocolate cookie crumbs in parfait glasses.

Melting chocolate with other ingredients is quick and carefree. "Before microwave," it was either a long slow process in a double boiler or a chancy undertaking with constant stirring in a heavy saucepan on a burner. The only thing to remember with the microwave method is not to overcook. Stop microwaving and stir at the time indicated. Often you'll be able to stir enough to melt the chocolate. If not, continue microwaving and stirring at 30-second intervals until ingredients are melted when stirred.

A crumb crust takes only 1 1/2 to two minutes of microwaving, versus 10 minutes in your conventional oven. Ingredients should be well mixed in; otherwise the more sugary parts can burn. Be careful not to overcook. When done, the Chocolate Crumb Crust (below) has lost its shiny, wet look in most spots.

The filling for Hershey's Syrup Pie is a thick pudding, so it's perfect for microwaving. Stir well at

the times indicated to keep the mixture satiny smooth. Using a wire whisk (which must be removed during cooking) or one of the new microwave plastic whisks (which can be left in during cooking) is ideal.

I've added directions for microwaving a pastry crust. When used with chocolate filling, instead of brushing top edges with vanilla to give a golden brown color, I sprinkle edges with cocoa. After micro-baking, I gently rub the cocoa in to make a smooth baked-look.

Today's recipes are from a new cookbook by Hershey Kitchens, "Simply Chocolate." While the 96-page softcover book is mostly conventional cooking (150 total recipes), 23 recipes give microwave directions. Many of the other recipes could be easily adapted to microwave. Recipes include other fantastic pies, along with tempting cakes, cookies, fudges and desserts. It's a convenient 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 -inch size with mouth-watering color photos. For your copy, send either \$5.95 or \$2.95 with two proofs of purchase (UPC symbols) from Hershey's chocolate chips. Send a check or money order to: Simply Chocolate, Box 8251-D, Ronks, PA 17573. Allow six to eight weeks for delivery.

Chocolate-Marshmallow Mousse Pie

Chocolate Crumb Crust (Below)
1 bar (8 ounces) milk chocolate bar
1 1/2 cups miniature marshmallows
1/2 cup milk

1 cup chilled whipped cream

Prepare Chocolate Crumb Crust (below) and cool completely or use 8-inch (6 ounces) packaged chocolate-flavored crumb crust.

Break chocolate bar into pieces; place in microwave-safe medium bowl with marshmallows and milk. Microwave (High) 1 to 1 1/2 minutes, stirring after 45 seconds, just until mixture is melted and smooth when stirred; cool to room temperature. In small mixer bowl beat cream until stiff, fold into cooled chocolate mixture. Pour into cooled crust. Cover; chill until firm, about 2 to 3 hours. Garnish as desired. Makes 8 servings.

Hint: If desired, substitute 1 1/2 cups milk chocolate chips for chocolate candy bar.

Each serving: 497 calories, 6g protein, 32g fat, 49g carbohydrate, 327 mg sodium, 70 mg cholesterol.

Microwave Chocolate Crumb Crust

1/2 cup butter or margarine
1 1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs
6 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar

In microwave-safe small bowl, microwave butter (High) about 1 minute until melted. Stir in graham cracker crumbs, cocoa and confectioners' sugar until well blended. Press on bottom and up sides of microwave-safe 9-inch pie plate. Microwave (High) 1 1/2 to 2 minutes, rotating pie plate after 1 minute. When done, crust is dry and blistered-looking in most spots. (Do not overcook). Cool completely before filling.

Hershey's Syrup Pie

9-inch micro-baked or baked pastry crust (below)
2 egg yolks
1/2 cup cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon salt (optional)
1 1/4 cups milk
1 cup Hershey's Syrup
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Syrup Whipped Topping (below)
Fresh fruit

Prepare pastry shell; cool. In microwave-safe medium bowl beat egg yolks. Add cornstarch,

salt, milk and syrup; mix until smooth. Microwave on Medium-High (70% power, 450-500 watts) 6 to 8 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes with wire whisk or until mixture is smooth and very thick. Stir in vanilla. Pour into crust. Press plastic wrap directly onto surface; chill several hours or overnight. Garnish with Syrup Whipped Topping and fresh fruit. Makes 8 servings.

Hint: If your microwave does not have Medium-High power, microwave on High (650-700 watts) 5 to 6 minutes, stirring after each 1 1/2 minutes.

Each serving — without topping and fruit: 268 calories, 5g protein, 11g fat, 42g carbohydrate, 191mg sodium, 66 mg cholesterol.

Each serving — with topping: 410 calories, 6g protein, 21g fat, 57g carbohydrate, 211mg sodium, 100mg cholesterol.

Syrup Whipped Topping

1 cup chilled whipping cream
1/2 cup Hershey's syrup
2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

In small mixer bowl combine chilled whipping cream, Hershey's syrup, confectioners' sugar and vanilla extract. Beat just until cream holds definite shape. (Do not over beat). Makes about 2 1/2 cups topping.

Pastry Crust

Prepare pastry crust according to favorite recipe and place in microwave-safe pie plate. Prick bottom and sides well with fork. If desired for more color, brush top edges with vanilla. Microwave (High) 3 to 5 minutes, rotating pie plate and watching carefully towards end of cooking. Pastry is done when top looks dry and blistered and feels firm.

Frozen crust: Thaw 1 to 3 minutes on Medium Low or according to package directions. If in foil Pan, remove crust from pan while still frozen by bending pan edges and popping crust out into a microwave-safe pie plate.

Continue as above.

Questions for Joyce?

Do you have a question about microwave cooking? Send it to Microwave Minutes, c/o 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.

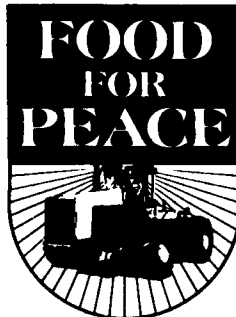
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- no war on drugs;
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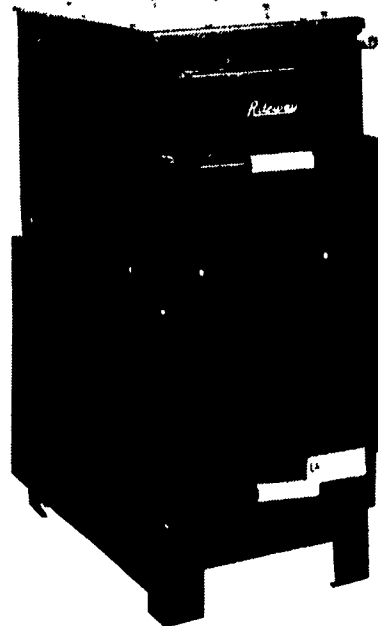
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Place: Gettysburg Holiday Inn, 516 Baltimore Ave.
Date: Saturday, February 18 **Time:** 12:30 PM to 5:30 PM
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