

MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

Cooking for two is easy with your microwave oven.

Take today's recipes as examples. Whether you prefer a light pasta dish or an old-fashioned hamburger goulash, you don't need to make a huge amount and eat it all week. Micro-cooking small amounts of these, and other pasta dishes, is convenient and quick.

New-Style Linguine With Clam Sauce (below) is a light clam sauce over cooked linguine. The sauce needs little cooking. Onion and garlic are cooked covered to soften them; then other ingredients are added and heated. The sauce is ready in 5 minutes or less.

Cooking linguine — or you could substitute spaghetti, thin spaghetti, or even noodles — isn't much faster in the microwave than on the range-top. And I wouldn't recommend it for over 4 servings. (You'd need a huge cooking dish,

and the time needed to boil the water and cook pasta would be much longer than conventionally.) But for 2 servings, micro-cooking long, thin kinds of pasta is convenient and easy.

Some microwave cookbooks give directions that start with linguine or spaghetti in cold water, but I've found that doesn't work well. Instead, add pasta to boiling water — it's the best way to prevent a "pasty" taste and stuck-together strands. After pasta is added, cook it uncovered to prevent boil-overs.

Old-Time Hamburger Goulash For Two is a variation of an old favorite. Here ground beef and onion are cooked together until beef is no longer pink. The remaining ingredients are added, including raw noodles, and everything is cooked together. Total cooking time is about 13 minutes. Another plus: there's only 1 cooking dish, and that 1 dish can go

right to the table for serving.

There are several secrets for success in a recipe like this, where uncooked noodles are cooked with other ingredients: Use good-quality medium-thick noodles to prevent a starchy taste. Use enough liquid and some fat to keep noodles from clumping together and tasting starchy. Add extra liquid halfway through cooking time if mixture looks dry. It still should be very juicy at that time. Finally, cook noodles until just barely done and let mixture stand, tightly covered, for at least 5 minutes (10 minutes is best). During standing time, noodles will finish cooking and mixture will thicken.

So go ahead and enjoy cooking and eating pasta for 2. These recipes can be doubled to serve 4 as main dishes too. See notes below each recipe.

Old-Time Hamburger Goulash For Two

½ pound lean ground beef
¼ cup chopped onion or 1 tablespoon minced instant onion
1 can (4½ ounces) sliced stewed tomatoes, undrained
1 tablespoon catsup
½ cup water
¼ teaspoon dried basil
2 cups uncooked cooked noodles
Salt and pepper (optional)

Place ground beef and onion in microwave-safe 1- to 1½-quart casserole. Microwave (High)

2-1/2 to 3 minutes, stirring once to break up meat, or until meat is no longer pink. (If desired, drain off fat and stir in 2 tablespoons vegetable oil.) Stir in half of tomatoes, breaking up with a spoon; all of catsup, water, and basil. Then stir in noodles. Pour remaining tomatoes atop noodles. Cover with lid or plastic wrap. Microwave (High) 8 to 10 minutes, stirring and pushing noodles into liquid after 5 minutes. (If mixture is dry, add another to cup water.) When done, noodles should be barely tender. Let stand, covered, 5 to 10 minutes to finish cooking noodles and to thicken. If desired, season to taste with salt and pepper. Makes 2 large servings.

Each serving: 495 calories, 30g protein, 18g fat, 50g carbohydrate, 548 mg sodium, 124 mg cholesterol.

For 4 to 5 servings: Double ingredients. Use a 2-quart casserole. Microwave ground beef and onion 4 to 6 minutes, stirring to break up meat after 3 minutes. Add remaining ingredients; microwave, covered, 15 to 18 minutes, stirring after 10 minutes. Continue as above.

New-Style Linguine With Clam Sauce For Two

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large clove garlic, minced
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 can (10 ounces) whole baby clams
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
1 tablespoon lemon juice
12 ounces linguine or 8 ounces spaghetti
Shredded Parmesan cheese

Place oil, garlic, and onion in microwave-safe 1-quart casserole. Cover with waxed paper. Microwave (High) 1-1/2 to 2 minutes or until onion is tender. Stir in undrained clams, parsley, and lemon juice. Cover and let stand while cooking linguine or spaghetti.

Fill microwave-safe 2-quart casserole half full of hot tap water. If desired, add 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cover with lid or plastic wrap. Microwave (High) 5 to 7 minutes or until water boils. Add linguine. Microwave (High), uncovered, 4 to 7 minutes or until linguine is al dente. Drain.

Microwave clam sauce 2 to 3 minutes or until hot. Spoon sauce over cooked linguine in shallow soup bowls; sprinkle each with

Parmesan cheese as desired. Provide soup spoons and forks for eating. Makes 2 large servings.

For 4 to 5 servings: Double ingredients. Cook linguine according to package directions in large amount of boiling water on range-top. While linguine cooks, microwave sauce. Use a 2-quart casserole and double cooking times. Serve as above.

Each serving: 598 calories, 27g protein, 19g fat, 84g carbohydrate, 98mg sodium, 93mg cholesterol.

Questions and answers—
Q. How can I adapt recipes to my 500-watt microwave? Recipes from your column and magazines take longer in my microwave. Is there a way I could figure out how much more time to use?

A. To figure approximate amount of time in a 500-watt oven, multiply cooking time at 600 to 700 watts by 1.3. For example, 1 pound of ground beef microwaves in 4 to 5 minutes in a higher-wattage oven. Multiplying 4 and 5 minutes by 1.3 (and rounding off) shows that cooking may take 5-1/4 to 6-3/4 minutes in your 500-watt microwave.

However, these, like all microwave times, are only guides. In some lower-wattage microwave ovens, cooking time for quick-cooking foods or small amounts is almost as fast as in some higher-wattage ovens. So especially for quick-cooking foods and small amounts, cook the maximum time given in a recipe for a higher-wattage microwave; check for doneness; and add more time accordingly.

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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Fads And Figures

Despite the recent push toward paperless payments, the vast majority of consumers still prefer checks. According to a national survey of 1,000 adults 18 years of age or older, nearly three-quarters (72 percent) chose checks as their preferred method of payment.

Only two percent cited a preference for electronic payments such as debit cards and electronic funds transfer (EFT). Cash was a distant second as the preferred method of payment with 21 percent saying they preferred currency. Credit cards were third at five percent.

Nearly 70 percent of survey

respondents like the record keeping and receipt advantages of checks. About 60 percent say they prefer checks because checks are convenient and easy to use. According to the survey, which was sponsored by the Payment Systems Education Association (PSEA), checks are favored among all demographic groups but are most popular among females (75 percent), persons 25 or older (75 percent), married individuals (77 percent), those with an income in the \$30,000 to \$50,000 range (80 percent), and

persons with some education after high school (75 percent).

Experts in the financial field have their own views on why checks check out so well with consumers. "Checks are popular because they meet the needs of consumers better than any other form of payment," explains Peter Braunfisch, Financial Stationers president. "They are convenient and easy to use. "The consumer has spoken," says David Meyers, president of PSEA. "Check writing remains the most popular way to pay."

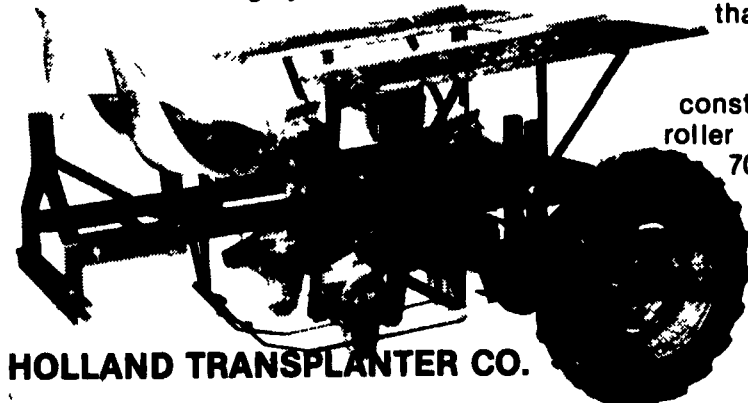


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Search For Outdoor Grill Recipes

SYKESVILLE, MD — The Maryland Beef Council will hold the Maryland Beef Cook-Off Outdoor Barbecue Category Contest, during the First Annual Maryland BEEFestival at the 200-acre "Back Acres Farm" in Mt. Airy, Sunday, June 25, 12 noon - 6 p.m.

The Maryland resident with the best original beef recipe, cooked on the grill, will win \$100 and their recipe will be entered in the Mid-Atlantic Region Beef Cook-Off Contest (second and third prize winners will receive cash awards). The winner of the Regional Contest will proceed to the National Beef Cook-Off in Portland, Oregon, September 17-19, 1989 where they will have the opportunity to win up to \$15,000 in cash and prizes. Margery Farr, a Rockville, MD resident was the 1988 Mid-Atlantic Region winner and proceeded to the National Beef Contest.

"I would like to encourage all Maryland amateur beef grillers to

enter their recipes and compete for the prizes," said Dr. Emmett Full, Chairman of The Maryland Beef Council. "The BEEFestival is not only for Cook-Off contestants—everyone's invited. It will be a full-day of family fun with a country band, arts & crafts, booths, microwave beef cooking demonstrations, and more." Beef on the grill recipes will be judged on taste, ease of preparation and practicality, originality and appearance, and nutritional value. Contestants' beef recipe entries must be submitted to The Maryland Beef Council, 4928 Carroll Manor Road, Baldwin, MD 21013, and postmarked no later than May 15, 1989 to be eligible. Contestants must be 18 years old or older with non-professional food status. For a complete list of contest rules and regulations, and further information on The 1st Annual Maryland BEEFestival, contact Anita L. Wehrman at 301-592-3940.

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