



MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

Kabobs grill perfectly when some ingredients are microwaved first.

Often when grilled (or broiling) food on a stick, quicker-cooking vegetables end up charred before all the other foods — usually meat and firm vegetables — are done.

The solution is to microwave the longer-cooking foods before threading them on skewers along with more-tender uncooked foods. Then you'll find every food on the stick cooks to the perfect doneness and is finished in about half the normal grilling time.

Today's recipes give you two supereasy kabob recipes where this technique is used. Sausage and Vegetable Kabobs call for precooking fresh sausage in water for a few minutes until sausages are done. Then the onion and green pepper pieces are added to soften them slightly during a few minutes of standing time. Cut the sausages into fourths first for the quickest cooking. Use a plastic-wrap cover or a tight lid to hold in steam.

In Vegetable Kabobs the potatoes are precooked in water until slightly tender. For extra flavor, add your favorite herb during cooking. The onions and green pepper pieces are softened slightly

by microwaving very briefly. Thread the well-drained vegetables alternately with uncooked mushrooms. Toward end of grilling, add a cherry tomato to each skewer tip.

Sausage and Vegetable Kabobs go well with a rice side-dish, cabbage salad and French bread. Vegetable Kabobs are a perfect accompaniment to grilled poultry or meat. Start grilling the poultry or meat outside while precooking the potatoes and onion slices in your microwave. Thread the vegetables on skewers and place them on the grill five to 10 minutes before your entree is cooked. Everything will be done — juicy and perfect — when you're ready for dinner.

Sausage and Vegetable Kabobs
1 pound (4-5) Italian sausages or fresh bratwurst

½ cup water
1 medium green pepper, cut into 1-inch squares
1 small onion, cut into 8 wedges
1 can (8 ounces) pineapple chunks, drained
Barbecue sauce.

Prepare grill so it's ready for cooking in about 10 minutes.

• Cut each sausage in fourths. Place sausages and water in a microwavable 2-quart casserole;

cover with lid or plastic wrap. Microwave (High) 3½ to 4½ minutes, stirring once, or until sausages are no longer pink. Working quickly, stir in green pepper and onion pieces; re-cover and let stand 5 minutes. Drain sausages and vegetables. Separate onion wedges into pieces. Thread vegetables, sausage and pineapple on 4 or 8 wooden or metal skewers. Grill over medium heat, turning occasionally and brushing with barbecue sauce, until sausages are browned (about 6 to 8 minutes per side). Makes 4 servings.

Each serving: 402 calories, 15g protein, 31g fat, 15g carbohydrate, 1,364mg sodium, 64 mg cholesterol.

Vegetable Kabobs

1¼ pounds new red potatoes (6-8 small potatoes)

½ cup water
½ teaspoon dried rosemary or thyme

1 medium onion
1 medium green pepper, cut into 1-inch squares

½ cup water
16 medium mushrooms
½ cup olive or vegetable oil
2 teaspoons barbecue spice or salt-free seasoning
3 large cherry tomatoes

Prepare grill so it's ready for cooking in about 10 minutes.

Cut each small potato in half. (Cut medium-size potatoes in fourths.) Place potatoes, ½ cup water and rosemary in a microwavable 2-quart casserole; cover with lid or plastic wrap. Microwave (High) 6 to 8 minutes, stirring once, or until potatoes are almost tender. Drain in colander and let stand to cool slightly. Meanwhile, cut onion in half, crosswise; then cut each half

lengthwise, into fourths. Separate the fourths into pieces. Place onions, green pepper pieces and ¼ cup water in same casserole; cover and microwave (High) 1 to 1½ minutes or until peppers just turn bright green. Thread potatoes, onions, green peppers and mushrooms alternately on 8 wooden or metal skewers; set aside. Stir together oil and barbecue spice in a heat-resistant dish. Grill kabobs over medium heat, turning occasionally and brushing with oil mixture, until vegetables are done and lightly browned (about 5 minutes per side). Add a cherry tomato to each skewer toward end of cooking. Makes 8 servings.

Each serving: 183 calories, 3g protein, 1g fat, 14g carbohydrate, 27mg sodium, 0 cholesterol.

Variation: Use a favorite herb butter or a store-bought Italian salad dressing instead of oil and spice mixture.

Hint: Before placing kabobs on grill, brush grill lightly with cooking oil.

Questions and answers -

Q. Is it possible to microwave regular popcorn? We grow our own popcorn, and I don't have good luck popping it in my microwave.

A. Yes, it is possible to microwave regular popcorn, but it should be done only in a special microwave popcorn popper. An ordinary microwave-safe plastic bowl or glass bowl should not be used because the plastic can melt or overheat or the glass can shatter (especially with added oil). A brown paper bag should not be used because it can catch on fire.

To help make your popcorn pop better, try restoring moisture to

your popcorn, or keeping it in the freezer. To restore moisture, sprinkle about one tablespoon water over a pound of popcorn. Cover the popcorn tightly and shake several times for the next two to three days.

You might also try popping corn a little longer than the last time — but do not continue microwaving once popping has stopped. That will just burn the popcorn. However, no matter what kind of popcorn, microwave popper, or microwave oven is used, there usually are more unpopped kernels than when conventionally popped.

Q. Can you scald milk or cream in the microwave?

A. Yes. Place milk or cream in a microwave-safe measure about double the amount of milk or cream. (For example, put 1 cup of milk in a 2-cup measure). Microwave on High until very hot (tiny bubbles start to form around edges and a thin film starts to form on the milk's surface). Allow about 2 to 2½ minutes per 1 cup of milk or cream. If you have a probe, set it for 175 degrees.

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.

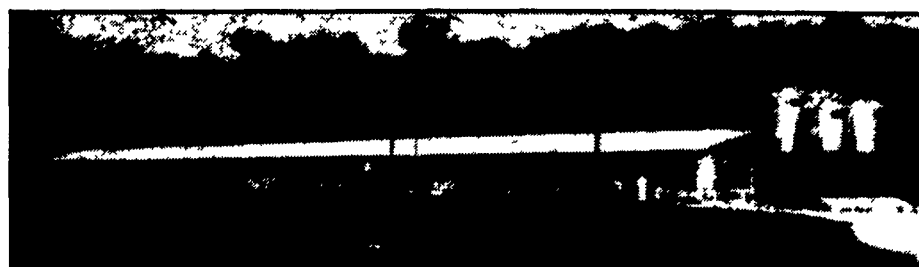
Joyce Battcher is an independent home economist microwave specialist.

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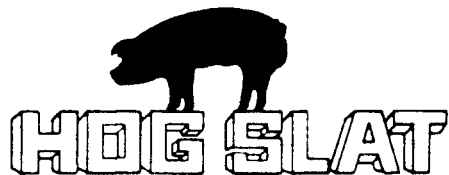
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