



MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

Yes, you can cook a homey "meat and potatoes" dinner for one or two. Follow today's recipes and my preparation plan for an easy-to-make and delicious-tasting meal.

The menu is: Individual Meatloaves, Parmesan Stuffed Potatoes, a frozen vegetable, and Pineapple Pudding.

Here's how to do it: Start by microwaving dessert. Then prepare and microwave the rest of the meal, taking advantage of carryover cooking and standing time. Allowing one food to stand outside your microwave to finish cooking while another food microwaves makes good sense. And remember, if your plan gets mixed up or your meal delayed, use your microwave for a quick reheat.

This meal takes but minutes from start to finish. For even faster preparation, prepare the dessert and stuffed potatoes ahead and refrigerate. Reheat potato after meatloaves are cooked.

Prepare and microwave dessert. Remember to stir during cooking at the times indicated to prevent a giant lump from forming. Spoon dessert into serving dishes. Chill, if desired.

Microwave potato. Be sure to pierce it in several spots to prevent it from exploding. Cook it until it

still feels slightly firm when pierced with a fork. While the potato microwaves, stir together meatloaf mixture and fill casseroles. Remember to make a small indentation in the center of each, so the center gets done faster. Cover each with waxed paper and set aside.

Measure about one cup of your favorite frozen vegetable from a bag of loose-pack vegetables into a small microwavable dish. Add one tablespoon of water. Cover the dish with plastic wrap and set aside.

After cooking the potato, let it stand for about five minutes or until easy to handle. Prepare stuffed potatoes, cover and set them aside.

Microwave meatloaves. Top with ketchup, cover dishes with foil, and let stand.

Microwave vegetable on High, 2 1/2 to four minutes or until hot. Stir once to speed cooking and make sure they are evenly heated.

Heat stuffed potatoes by microwaving one to two minutes.

Individual Meatloaves
 1/2 pound lean ground beef
 1/4 cup quick or old-fashioned oatmeal (uncooked)
 1/4 cup skim milk
 2 tablespoons minced onion
 1/4 teaspoon seasoned salt or herbs (optional)

1 tablespoon ketchup (optional)
 Stir together all ingredients except ketchup. Shape mixture into 2 even patties to fit 2 microwavable individual casseroles. Place in casseroles; press each patty lightly in center to make a small indentation. Cover with waxed paper. Microwave (High) 3 to 4 minutes or until meat is almost done in center. Let stand, covered, about 2 minutes. If meat is still pink toward center, microwave, covered, 30 to 60 seconds. Top with ketchup. Makes 2 servings.

For one: Cool 1 meatloaf. Cover tightly with freezer-proof wrap or place in freezer storage bag and freeze. To heat: Remove wrap or remove meatloaf from freezer bag; cover with waxed paper. Microwave on Medium (50 percent power, 325-350 watts) 3 to 4 minutes or until hot.

Each serving: 267 calories, 28g protein, 15g fat, 5g carbohydrate, 346mg sodium, 87mg cholesterol.

Parmesan Stuffed Potatoes
 1 medium baking potato
 1/4 cup plain yogurt or low-fat sour cream
 1/4 cup minced green onion tops
 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
 Salt and pepper (optional)
 Garnish: grated Parmesan cheese and paprika

Scrub potato and pierce skin twice with fork. Place on paper towels or microwave meat rack. Microwave (High) 4 to 5 minutes or until almost done, turning potato over halfway through cooking.

Let stand, covered, about 5 minutes or until easy to handle. Cut in half lengthwise and carefully remove potato pulp. Set shells aside. Break up potato pulp; stir in yogurt, onions and 2 tablespoons Parmesan. Season to taste. Fill potato shells; place on microwave serving plate. Sprinkle with Parmesan and paprika. Cover with waxed paper. Microwave (High) 1 to 2 minutes or until hot. Makes 2 servings.

Each serving: 201 calories, 10g protein, 4g fat, 31g carbohydrate, 105mg sodium, 20mg cholesterol.

For one: After stuffing, do not cook one potato half. Place it in a freezer-safe container, seal tightly and freeze. To serve: Microwave still-frozen potato half, covered with waxed paper, on Medium (50 percent power, 325-350 watts), 3 to 4 1/2 minutes per potato half.

Pineapple Pudding
 1 can (8 ounces) pineapple chunks
 2 teaspoons cornstarch
 2 teaspoons sugar (optional)
 Dash nutmeg

Drain juice from pineapple into a microwavable 2-cup measure. Set pineapple aside. Stir cornstarch, sugar and nutmeg into juice. Microwave (High) 1 minute. Stir well. Microwave (High) 30 to 60 seconds more or

until bubbly and thick. Stir in reserved pineapple. Spoon into dessert dishes. Serve warm or cold. Makes 2 servings.

Each serving: 81 calories, 0 protein, 0 fat, 21g carbohydrate, 10mg sodium, 0 cholesterol.

Hint: It may be necessary to add sugar to taste when using pineapple packed in juice.

Variation: Stir fresh fruit — such as grapes, sliced bananas, diced apples or diced peaches — into cooled pudding before serving.

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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