

# MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

Plump dumplings steaming in a pot of bubbling stew, sauerkraut or chicken soup can bring memories of old-fashioned, cozy winter meals.

In your microwave, dumplings cook in about five minutes. They're an easy-to-make "comfort food." And they stretch a stew to feed a few extra or make a soup more filling for hungry winter appetites.

Start out by making the main dish, usually a stew or thick soup. It can be cooked "from scratch" in your microwave, like today's chili recipe. It can be reheated from yesterday's conventionally cooked stew, soup or similar dish. Or you can start with a can of store-bought stew or a combination of your favorite condensed and ready-to-eat canned soups.

Microwave this stew, covered, until it's almost boiling or is very hot. If it's not hot, the dumplings will cook slower on the bottom. Which means they'll probably be tough and dried out around the top edges! Use a deep, rather than shallow, casserole to speed cooking.

While the stew heats, stir up the dumplings. Have them ready to add as soon as the stew is hot. Drop the dumpling dough in small spoonfuls onto the hot stew. For the most even cooking, make the dumplings small (they get bigger as they cook), and leave a half-inch or so between them. Arrange the dough around the edges of the dish and leave the center open. Cover the dish with a lid or waxed paper.

Microwave on High (100 percent power, 650 to 700 watts) for four to five minutes. Cooking time

may be longer in recipes where dumpling dough is thinner than today's recipes or when dumplings are cooked atop a very thin soup. Cooking time will also be longer in a lower-wattage microwave.

Check dumplings for doneness after 3 1/2 minutes. When done, the dumplings will no longer be doughy-looking. Try to separate them with a fork. If necessary, recover and continue microwaving for intervals of 30 seconds. If your microwave cooks unevenly, rotate the dish once during cooking. And, if one dumpling just won't get done, finish cooking it, with a little stew underneath, in a custard cup covered with waxed paper.

The easiest dumplings are made with biscuit mix. I've included a basic recipe, which you can cook atop any of your favorite stews or thick soups. Today's other recipe includes a different kind of dumpling. These corn dumplings are delicious, too. They go well with the thick, spicy chili to make a comforting and cozy winter meal.

### Easy

**Microwave Dumplings**  
1 cup buttermilk biscuit/baking mix (spooned into measure)  
1/2 cup milk

Stir biscuit mix and milk together until mixed. Do not beat. (Some small lumps should remain.) Drop by 8 small spoonfuls around edges of hot stew, thick soup or other main dish, leaving center open. Cover with lid or waxed paper. Microwave (High) 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 minutes or until dumplings no longer look doughy on top (and when pulled apart with fork, inside parts are cooked).

Serve warm. Makes 8 small dumplings.

Hint: For fastest cooking: Microwave stew or soup in a deep casserole until almost boiling before adding dumplings; make small dumplings, as directed (not large); and set a glass upright in center of stew before cooking.

Variations: For chicken corn or stew, stir in 1/4 teaspoon poultry seasoning to biscuit mix before adding milk. For beef stew or soup, add 1/4 teaspoon dried basil leaves.

Each dumpling: 65 calories, 1g protein, 3g fat, 11g carbohydrate, 185mg sodium, 2mg cholesterol.

### Chili With Corn Dumplings

1 pound lean ground beef  
1 large onion, diced  
1/2 green pepper, diced  
1 garlic clove, minced or 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder  
3-4 teaspoons chili powder  
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin  
Salt and peppere (optional)  
1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce  
1 can (16 ounces) tomatoes in juice, undrained  
1 can (16 ounces) kidney beans, drained  
1-2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce

### Corn Dumplings (below)

Crumble ground beef into a deep microwavable 2- to 3-quart casserole; add onion, green pepper and garlic. Cover casserole with waxed paper. Microwave (High) 6 to 7 minutes, stirring after each 2 minutes, until beef is barely cooked. Drain fat, if desired. (If using lean beef, there may be a very small amount of fat that adds flavor to the finished chili.) Stir in chili powder, cumin, and salt and pepper to taste. Stir in tomato sauce, undrained tomatoes, drained kidney beans and Worcestershire sauce. Microwave (High), covered with lid or waxed paper, 9 to 11 minutes or until chili starts to boil, stirring once.

Whili chili cooks, mix Corn Dumplings (below). Set a small, glass drinking glass upright in center of chili. Drop dumplings by 8 small spoonfuls around edges of hot chili. Cover with lid or waxed paper. Microwave (High) 4 to 6 minutes or until dumplings no longer look doughy on top. When pulled apart with a fork, inside edges and bottoms are cooked. Let stand, covered, 5 minutes. Serve hot. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

To make ahead: Prepare chili as above. (Dumplings are best made right before serving, although small portions of chili with cooked dumplings reheat well.) Cover tightly and refrigerate until serving time. Then microwave (High), tightly covered, for 8 to 11 minutes or until hot, stirring once or twice. Add dumpling dough and continue as above.

Each serving — 1/4 of recipe, with Corn Dumplings: 297 calories, 18g protein, 11g fat, 31g carbohydrate, 570mg sodium, 64mg cholesterol.

### Corn Dumplings

1/2 cup all-purpose flour  
1/2 cup yellow cornmeal  
1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 cup milk  
1 egg  
1 tablespoon vegetable oil

In a medium mixing bowl, stir together flour, commeal, baking powder and salt. In a separate bowl or measure, stir together milk, egg and oil; add to dry ingredients and mix well. (Do not beat.) Cook according to directions above. Makes 8 small dumplings.

### Questions for Joyce?

Do you have a question about microwave cooking? Send it to Microwave Minutes, % Extra Newspaper Features, P.O. Box 6118, Rochester, Minn. 55903. Please include a self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope.

# Help For Child Care Directors

CREAMERY (Montgomery)

— Directing a child care center or nursery school requires not only skills in child development and people skills, it also requires administrative skills. Penn State Cooperative Extension is offering a one-day seminar for child care directors on Tuesday, March 5, 1991 at Bentley's Restaurant in North Wales, Montgomery County. Registration begins at 9 a.m. and the workshop is from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The day will begin with Gregory Bruce, director of the MBA program at LaSalle University, speaking on leadership styles and how this affects one's ability to work effectively with others. Betsy Caesar, from General Recreation, Inc., will share the latest design and safety ideas in playground equipment. Dave Suchanic, extension agent will share tips on conducting an effective interview. This will include forms, check lists and other valuable tools to use during an interview. Rhonda Einstein, from Family Services of Montgomery County, will focus on stress management for child care directors.

The cost for the day is \$25 and includes lunch and reference materials. Participants will receive .5 CEU from Penn State University. Registration is required. To receive your registration form, call the Montgomery County Extension office at 489-4315.



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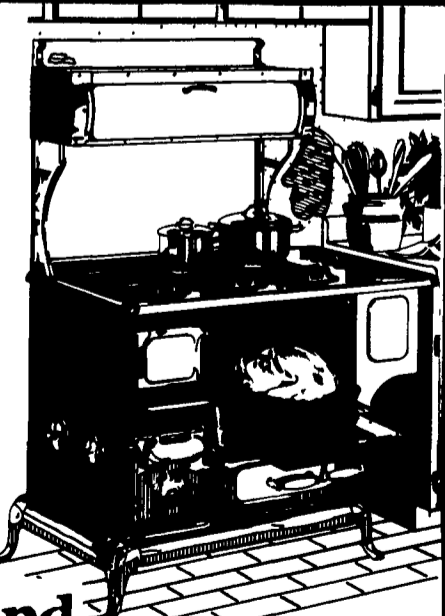
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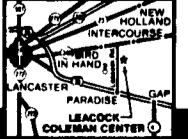
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