



MICROWAVE MINUTES

By **JOYCE BATTCHER**

A homemade hot sandwich is one answer to the question: "What can I cook that really tastes good and is done really fast?"

With your microwave oven, one homemade sandwich is done in less than five minutes from refrigerator to table. Of, if you're cooking for three or four (or if some ingredients need thawing first), preparation time is no more than 15 minutes.

Ingredient-wise, it means having some fish fillets or boneless chicken breasts handy. (When I buy fish fillets or chicken breasts, I wrap them individually in freezer paper or freeze them on a cookie sheet, then quickly transfer them to a freezer-proof container, separating pieces with waxed paper.) Also, keep a package of hamburger rolls or whole wheat bread in your freezer and remove rolls or slices as you need them. Keep a head of lettuce in your refrigerator, along with some salad and cheese (or keep grated natural cheese in your freezer.)

To season fish or chicken sandwiches, you have many choices. Common spices, such as those used in today's recipes, can be sprinkled on as needed. Or you can combine them in a small jar with a sprinkle-on top and have the mixture ready to use as needed. Microwave season coating mixes, such as French's

Lemon Dill Fish, Lemon Butter Fish, Italian Parmesan Chicken, Garlic Butter Chicken or Barbecue Chicken work well. Use them according to package directions with a pound of fish or chicken breasts, or pour envelope contents into a jar with a sprinkle-on top and use for individual servings.

The first recipe, Fast Fish Burgers, is very simple: microwaving seasoned fish fillets, popping them in toasted rolls or bread and adding lettuce and salad dressing. These fish sandwiches are fresh-tasting and better for you than fast-food versions. There's no extra calories from breading and no extra fat from deep-fat frying — just good fresh-tasting fish.

Be careful not to overcook the fish by following recipe directions. And, drain off any liquid that forms during cooking to prevent the roll or bread from getting soggy.

Deluxe Barbecued Chicken Burgers are also quick and easy to make. Again, be careful not to overcook by following directions. Here, as with the fish, arranging,

covering and standing time help give perfect results.

During final heating, be sure to follow recipe directions to keep rolls from getting soggy. And do not microwave too long. If cheese melts completely or rolls feel hot, cheese will taste rubbery and the rolls tough.

Fast Fish Burgers

1 pound lean boneless fish fillets, such as torsk (cod), haddock, halibut, pollack, ocean perch, etc.
1 teaspoon no-salt lemon herb seasoning

¼ teaspoon dill weed
¼ teaspoon paprika
Dash ground pepper (optional)
4 whole wheat hamburger rolls or bread slices, toasted
Lettuce leaves
Low-calorie salad dressing, mayonnaise, or tarter sauce.

If frozen, thaw fish and pat dry with paper towels. Place fish in a shallow microwavable casserole or 9-inch baking dish. Combine no-salt lemon herb seasoning, dill weed and paprika (and pepper if desired), or substitute a store-bought microwave fish seasoned coating mix. Sprinkle about half of mixture on fish; turn fish over and sprinkle with remaining mixture. Arrange fish with thickest, meatiest parts to outside edges of dish. Tuck thin tail-parts underneath. Cover with waxed paper. Microwave (High) 3 to 5 minutes, rotating dish once, or until fish starts to look opaque (solid white). Check after 3 minutes; rearrange fish if necessary for even cooking. Let stand, covered, about 2 minutes. Fish is done when it is completely opaqued and, when

tested with fork, flakes easily. Drain fish and place on toasted rolls or bread. Top with lettuce, salad dressing and roll top. Makes 4 servings.

TO THAW FISH: Microwave on Medium Low (30 percent power, and 200 watts) 1½ minutes. Rotate and turn over; separate fish as soon as possible. Microwave on Medium Low 1½ minutes more. Remove thawed pieces when they are pliable, but still feel icy cold. Let stand 5 minutes before cooking.

FOR ONE: Combine spices. (If desired, place a jar with a sprinkle-on top). Place a 3 to 4-ounce fillet in a small microwavable baking dish or saucer. Sprinkle with desired amount of spice mixture. (Store remaining mixture, tightly covered in a dark, dry, cool place.) Cover fish with waxed paper. Microwave (High) 1 to 1½ minutes, checking after 1 minute, or until almost solid white. Continue as above.

Each sandwich: 315 calories, 29g protein, 10g fat, 22g carbohydrate, 399mg sodium, 0 cholesterol.

Deluxe Barbecued Chicken Burgers

2 (3 to 4 oz. each) boneless chicken breast halves
Paprika
Onion powder
Garlic powder (optional)
Ground black pepper (optional)
Butter or margarine
2 to 4 whole wheat hamburger rolls, English muffins or Kaiser rolls, toasted
Thick barbecue sauce
2 to 4 slices reduced-fat Cheddar cheese.

Sprinkle both sides of chicken with onion powder and paprika (and, if used, garlic powder and pepper), or substitute a store-bought microwave chicken seasoned coating mix. Shape each into a rounded patty on a microwavable plate or pie plate. Cover

with waxed paper. Microwave (High) 1 minute; turn patties over, rearrange and re-cover. Microwave (High) 1 to 1½ minutes or until center looks done and feels firm. Let stand 3 minutes before testing for final doneness. Test by cutting into thickest part of chicken. If meat and juices are golden, rather than pink, chicken is done.

Lightly buttered rolls and set roll bottoms in a doughnut shape on a microwave bacon rack or paper-towel lined tray. Top with chicken; drizzel each with about 1 tablespoon barbecue sauce. Top with cheese and roll top. Cover with a paper towel. Microwave on Medium (50 percent power, 325-350 watts) 1 to 1½ minutes or until cheese barely starts to melt. Makes 2 large or 4 small sandwiches.

VARIATION: Microwave 2 prepared breaded chicken patties according to package directions. (Allow about 1½ minutes to High per patty. Cover with waxed paper.) Continue as above.

(Each large sandwich: 290 calories, 31g protein, 8g fat, 22g carbohydrate, 515mg sodium, 82 mg cholesterol.)

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, Minn. 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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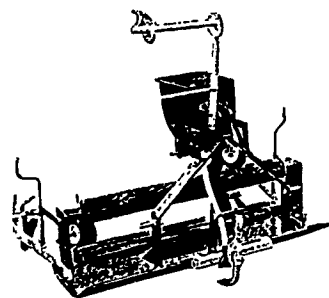
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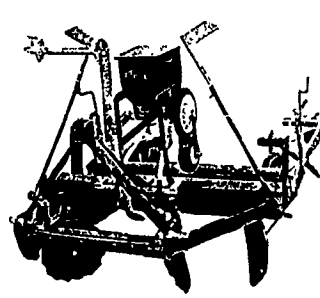
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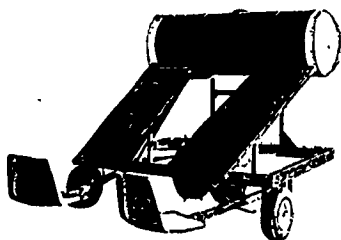
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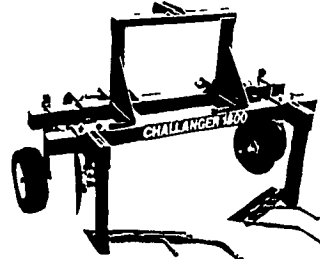
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