



MICROWAVE MINUTES

By JOYCE BATTCHER

Think of leftovers as your bonus for cooking a large meal. And, think of your microwave as the fast way to make a delicious second meal. Dice leftover pieces of meat or poultry and combine them with some cooked vegetables and a low calorie microwaved sauce for a wonderful tasting main dish.

Both of today's recipes call for cooking a vegetable first. Green peppers and onions are steamed in a little water for the turkey dish, while frozen Brussels sprouts and a bit of green onion are the beginning for the ham casserole. Both combinations are cooked quickly and nutritiously in the same dish that you can use later for serving.

The sauce is what adds character to both dishes. It's cooked separately and then added to the other ingredients. And, its just about foolproof to make in your microwave. There's no chance of scorching, no constant stirring and less chance of lumpy results. Also, at the end, there's no sticky pan to clean up.

The sauce for Devilish Turkey and Peppers is a standard cornstarch-based sauce. It's flavored with Worcestershire, brown sugar and prepared mustard to give a not-so-sweet-and-sour sauce with a hint of devilish flavor. (Add more prepared mustard and some hot pepper sauce if you like a stronger deviled flavor.) To get a smooth mixture, the cornstarch and sugar are stirred together first, then Worcestershire and mustard stirred in and finally the

broth is added gradually.

The cornstarch sauce must come to a full boil in order to thicken. Since mixtures boil high in the microwave a big enough cooking dish is needed. A four to six-cup measure works best for cooking sauces. A deep container, like a measure — rather than a shallower casserole — let the mixture heat and thicken more evenly.

The sauce which goes into Ham and Brussels Sprouts Casserole is not your usual milk, butter and flour-based white sauce. Instead, it's a mixture of flour and non-fat plain yogurt. Calories and fat are low in this sauce and the flavor has a special tang which compliments flavors of ham and vegetables. It's a bit thicker than traditional white sauce. Try the sauce made without mustard and seasoned with herbs for a good variation to use with other vegetables, such as asparagus, cauliflower, green beans and broccoli.

To prevent yogurt from separating, bring it to room temperature before cooking or before adding it to hot mixtures. If there's no time for yogurt to set out, microwave an opened carton for 30 seconds on Medium Low (30 percent power, about 200 watts). (If the carton contains metal, remove the yogurt to a small microwavable dish first.) Stir and repeat microwaving on Medium Low at 15-second intervals or until room temperature.

Both sauces are stirred at one-minute intervals to prevent them from forming a big lump in the

bottom, and towards the end of cooking time to prevent boilovers. A wire whisk is ideal for stirring sauces because if the sauce starts to get lumpy, whisking it smooths it quickly.

Devilish Turkey and Peppers

- 1 large green pepper, diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 tablespoons water
- 2 cups diced cooked turkey
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons low-sodium Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 10½-ounce can condensed chicken broth

Hot cooked rice or chow mein noodles

Place green pepper, onion and water in a microwavable 1½ to 2-quart casserole. Cover with lid or plastic wrap. Microwave (High) 2 to 3 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Stir in turkey, re-cover and set aside.

Stir together brown sugar and cornstarch in a microwavable 1 quart measure. Add Worcestershire sauce, prepared mustard, stirring until smooth. Add condensed broth. Microwave (High) 4 to 5 minutes, stirring after each minute, or until thick and bubbly around edges. Stir into reserved turkey mixture. If necessary, cover and microwave (High) 1 to 3 minutes or until hot. Makes about 4 servings.

Each serving: 172 calories, 17g protein, 1g fat, 23g carbohydrate, 637mg sodium, 32mg cholesterol.

VARIATIONS: Add 1 cup cooked, drained, sliced carrots or other cooked vegetable to turkey mixture. For a more deviled flavor, add another 2 to 3 teaspoons prepared mustard and ¼ to ¼ teaspoon hot pepper sauce.

Ham and Brussels Sprouts Casserole

- 1 10-ounce package frozen Brussels sprouts or 1 pint (1 pound) fresh Brussels sprouts

- ¼ cup sliced green onion
- 2 cups diced cooked lean smoked ham
- 1 8-ounce carton non-fat plain yogurt
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1½ to 2 teaspoons Dijon-style prepared mustard
- Dash ground white or black pepper
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese

Place frozen Brussels sprouts and green onion in a microwavable 1½ to 2-quart casserole. Cover with lid or plastic wrap. Microwave (High) 4 to 5 minutes or until Brussels sprouts are thawed and hot. Stir in ham, re-cover and set aside.

Stir together yogurt, flour, Dijon-style mustard and pepper in a microwavable 1 quart measure. Microwave (High) 2½ to 3 minutes stirring after each minute, or until thick and starting to bubble around edges. Stir into reserved ham mixture, along with cheese. If necessary, cover and microwave (High) 1 to 3 minutes

or until hot. Makes about 4 servings.

Each serving: 244 calories, 23g protein, 14g fat, 12g carbohydrate, 842mg sodium, 57mg cholesterol.)

VARIATION: Substitute reduced-fat cheese for regular Swiss cheese. Or substitute 4 turkey for ham and reduced-fat or regular sharp Cheddar cheese for the Swiss cheese.

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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Manage Tension

Keeping Tension Within Reasonable Limits

1. *See your Physician:* A check-up is always important especially if you are busy. Your physician can usually discover the cause of frequent "aches and pains."

2. *Talk it Over:* When tensions build up, discuss the problem with a close friend or with the people involved.

3. *Exercise Regularly:* Swim, walk, bicycle, jog, any favorite sport will help you let off steam and work out stress.

4. *Plan your Work:* Tension and anxiety really build up when your work seems endless. Plan your

work to use time and energy more efficiently.

5. *Take a Break:* A change of pace, no matter how short, gives you a new outlook on old problems.

6. *Learn to Relax:* Everyone can teach himself or herself to relax. Just a few minutes of peace and quiet every day makes a big difference. Try it!

7. *Be Realistic:* People who expect too much of themselves can get tense if things do not work out. Set practical goals and expect to be successful.

8. *Avoid Stress:* Whenever possible, plan to avoid too many big changes coming at the same time.

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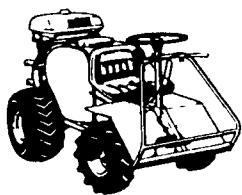
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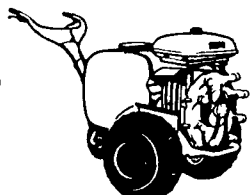
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