



Have You Heard?

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HOW TO MICROWAVE SAFELY

The popularity of microwave cooking continues to grow. Almost every American home possesses at least one oven. However, concerns about the safety of cooking meat and poultry products in the microwave persist. Even the cookware and plastic wraps used in the ovens have come under question.

In addition, there are traits, unique to microwave cooking, that affect how completely food is

cooked. "Cold spots" can occur because of the irregular way the microwaves enter the oven and are absorbed by the food.

Since we have traditionally relied on thorough cooking to kill bacteria that may be present in food, we should take simple, yet effective steps to ensure even cooking when using a microwave.

If you have a microwave, carefully read the following tips on how to microwave safely.

DEFROSTING

* When using the microwave to

defrost foods, plan to finish the cooking immediately. Some areas of larger food items may begin to cook during the defrost cycle, raising the temperature to a point where bacteria can flourish.

* Remove food from store wrap prior to thawing. Foam insulated trays and plastic wraps are not heat stable at high temperatures. They can melt or warp from the food's heat, possible causing chemicals to migrate into the food.

* Do not defrost or hold food at room temperature for more than two hours. It is easy to forget all about a food item thawing in the microwave oven. Set a timer to sound an alert when the thawing time is complete.

COOKING

* Have large pieces of meat deboned. Bone can shield the meat around it from thorough cooking.

* Arrange food items uniformly in a covered dish, and add a little liquid. Under the cover, steam helps kill bacteria and ensure uniform heating. Either plastic wrap or a glass cover works well. Many

recipes suggest venting a small area, allowing some steam to escape. Plastic wrap should not touch the food.

* Cook large pieces of meat at 50% power for longer periods of time. This allows the heat to reach deeper portions without overcooking outer areas. Commercial oven cooking bags can also help even out cooking and provide a tender product.

* Move the food inside the dish several times during cooking. Stir soups and stews. If you do not have a turntable, turn the entire dish during cooking. This is especially important for foods like casseroles that cannot be stirred.

* Do not cook whole, stuffed poultry in the microwave. The bones and density of the bird do

not allow even cooking. Microwaves may not thoroughly cook the moist stuffing deep inside the bird either.

* Never partially cook food. If planning to combine microwave cooking with conventional roasting, broiling or grilling, transfer the microwaved foods to conventional heat immediately.

* Use a temperature probe or meat thermometer to verify the food has reached a safe temperature. Check the temperature in several places, avoiding fat and bone. It should reach 160 degrees F. for red meat and 180 degrees for poultry.

* Observe the standing time given in the recipe. It is necessary to complete the cooking process.

Ball Players Join Promotion

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Jay Bell, the Pittsburgh Pirates shortstop, will again be serving as a spokesperson for Pennsylvania's dairy farmers. Bell joined the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program's promotion efforts in 1991, and will continue throughout the 1992 baseball season to promote milk and dairy products to consumers and sports fans.

A major portion of Bell's involvement will be on the Pittsburgh Pirates Radio Network. Bell has created two advertisements, titled "Jay Bell Cliches" and "More Cliches." These catchy advertisements focus on Bell's hard hitting baseball experience and his con-

tinued need for milk.

As an addition to Bell's efforts, a limited number of the 1991 Jay Bell Growth Charts are available from the dairy farmers. Children interested in receiving a growth chart should prepare a story about why kids need to drink their milk and how milk helps Jay Bell play his game. These stories should be handwritten and one page or less. All entries should be sent to "Growth Chart Offer," the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program, 2301 N. Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110. Offer applies while supplies last. Further information is available by calling (717) 787-6903.

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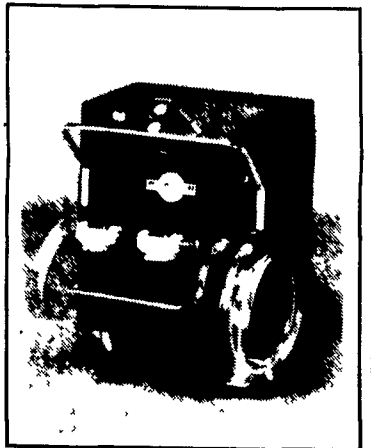
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