

## **Vegetable Microwave Cooking Guide**

***Presented by: Laurie Bates, NEA***

1. All fresh or frozen vegetables are cooked and reheated on High (900 watts.)
2. Choose a wide, shallow dish or plastic microwave bag.
3. Do not salt vegetables until after cooking.
4. Make sure you have a steam vent in your plastic bags.
5. Frozen vegetables can be cooked in the boxes. Simply make an "x" on the outside from corner to corner. Place the box in the microwave for 3 to 4 minutes.
6. After cooking, allow for standing time.
7. Frozen vegetables can be used in place of fresh vegetables.
8. To peel onions more easily, place them in a covered container and microwave for one to two minutes at 900 watts.
9. For salads, dry or crisp older bread for croutons. Microwave four cups of cubed bread for five to seven minutes at 900 watts, stirring several times
10. Season with salt after cooking if desired. Salt can reduce the microwave penetration depth and this can dehydrate and toughen some foods.
11. Soften refrigerated butter or margarine by heating for 30 seconds at 900 watts. To melt the butter; heat for one minute at 900 watts.

### **Potatoes**

Potatoes should be pierced only once. The more you pierce the potato the more moisture that you lose and the dryer the potato will be. Microwaves need moisture to cook and the more moisture you have the faster it will cook

The white potato has the most moisture and the red potato is next, with the russet having the least.

A white potato takes approximately 3 minutes to cook on high power, a red would take 4 minutes and a russet would take 4 to 5 minutes. When placing a potato in the microwave, make sure that the wide end is facing out so that it will cook all the way through. If one potato takes 4 minutes the next potato will take half again that time. Wrap potatoes in foil with the shiny side in and let them have standing time. It will continue to cook and stay warm for 30-45 minutes.

### **Corn**

When cooking corn in the microwave, gently peel down the husk, wash the corn, then pull the husk up over the corn. Secure with a rubber band. If you do not have the natural cover of the husk, use wax paper. Just wrap and twist the ends. This will hold the moisture in and also keep you from being burned by the steam.

### **Squash**

Spaghetti squash, banana squash and acorn squash have a thicker cover and will need to be pierced 4 or 5 times around the center with a knife and then put in the microwave whole. Here is a great tip: any thing that is more than 4 inches in diameter has to be cooked half the time on one side and then turned and cooked half the time on the other. In 900 wattage microwaves it will take 8 minutes to cook (4 on one side 4 on the other). An average spaghetti or butternut squash will take about 12 minutes. Wrap them in foil after cooking to allow for standing time; they will continue to cook for up to 30 minutes.

Be aware of the size of squash when you go shopping and make sure it is uniform in size.

### **Fresh Vegetables**

Layer fresh vegetables in a locking plastic bag. Do not add water. Poke a small hole in the top with a knife to create a vent so the lock does not un-clip. Cook with the bag standing up for 4 minutes (at 900 watts).

Microwaves only penetrate the first 1 inch of food, so make sure that you don't fill the bag too full. Drain off the excess moisture in the bag. Do not add water, as vegetables have enough moisture on their own. After they are cooked add seasoning, butter or cheese sauce.

### **Frozen Vegetables in a Box**

The box is a great cover. Simply cut an x in the box and turn it over on a plate. Cook for 3 minutes on high (900 watts).

#### **Pumpkin**

Pierce 3 or four holes near the stem. Set the pumpkin on its side and microwave for 4 minutes on High (100%) power. Turn it to the other side and microwave an additional 4 minutes. It should be soft to the touch. Allow 10 minutes of standing time. Remove the stem area. Cut the pumpkin in half. Remove the seeds and place in a colander. Set the seeds aside. (See recipe to follow) Scoop the pumpkin out and place in a bowl to mash. If the pumpkin needs more cooking, cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a lid and microwave for 2-3 minutes on 100%. Cool. Now it's ready to freeze for a later use, or use for pies, cakes, muffins, cookies, custards, flan, soup, cheesecake, ice cream or yogurt pie.

## **Recipes:**

### **Glazed Carrots**

*Makes 4 Servings*

Combine in medium or large steam bag:  
1 pound baby-cut carrots  
1 Tbsp. brown sugar  
1 Tbsp. butter  
½ tsp. cornstarch  
½ tsp. salt  
Seal bag and shake gently to combine ingredients. Pat carrots into a single layer. Place bag in microwave.  
Cook on full power for 6 minutes for crisp-tender carrots. If needed, continue

microwaving at 30-second intervals until carrots have reached desired level of tenderness.

Allow bag to stand for 1 minute before handling. Shake gently to coat carrots with glaze. Carefully open bag.

Garnish with 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley, if desired, and serve.

### **Sesame Garlic Vegetable Medley**

*2 Servings*

3 cups assorted vegetables (Suggested: broccoli, cauliflower, summer squash and julienned carrot pieces)

2 tsp. lemon juice

1 tsp. minced garlic or garlic paste

1 tsp. olive oil

¼ tsp. toasted sesame oil

2 Tbsp. minced white onion

2 Tbsp. minced parsley

**Directions**

**Prep:** Cut vegetables into bite-sized pieces (approx. 1" x 1"). Whisk together lemon juice, garlic, olive oil and sesame oil.

**Fill:** Place vegetables, onion, and the lemon juice mixture in a microwave steam bag.

**Seal bag.** Gently shake.

**Cook:** Microwave on high power (900 watts) for 3 ½ minutes. Let stand 1 minute before opening.

**Serve:** Season with salt & pepper. Stir well.

Top with parsley

### **Mashed Potatoes**

*Makes 2-4 Servings*

Combine in medium or large steam bag:

2 servings - 1 pound (about 4 small) potatoes.

or

4 servings - 2 pounds (about 2 large) potatoes and double the ingredients to add after cooking, (use a large steam bag).

Peel potatoes if desired. Cut potatoes into small (1-1½ inch) pieces of roughly uniform size. Put potatoes into steam bag. Seal bag. Pat potatoes into single layer. Place in microwave. Microwave on full power (900watts) for 6 minutes (for 2 servings) or 7½ minutes (for 4 servings), or until all potatoes are tender and smash easily when pressed. If needed, microwave for additional 30-second intervals until all potatoes are tender. Allow bag to stand for 1 minute before handling. Carefully open bag. Leave cooked potatoes in bag.

Add:

¼ cup milk (or more as desired)  
1 Tbsp. butter  
Pinch of salt (about 1/16 teaspoon)  
(remember to double if making 4 servings)

Squeeze air out of bag and seal. Hold top edge of bag in one hand and cover your other hand with a clean dish towel. Use your covered hand to mash potatoes by squeezing the bag.

If needed, add additional milk (1 Tbsp. at a time) and continue mashing until desired consistency is reached. Add additional salt or butter as desired, mashing until combined.

### **Ranch Red Potatoes**

2 Servings

1 pound red potato pieces (approx. 1" x 1")  
1½ tsp. olive oil  
1½ Tbsp. ranch salad dressing & seasoning Mix  
Optional: chopped Italian parsley.

Fill: Place potatoes in a microwave steaming bag. Add olive oil, seal bag and shake to coat with oil. Open bag and sprinkle on ranch salad dressing & seasoning mix. Seal bag and shake again. Cook: Microwave on High power (900 watts) for about 7–8 minutes. Let stand 2 minutes before opening. Season with salt & pepper. Garnish with parsley.

### **Sweet Potatoes with Apples & Cranberries**

Makes 4 Servings

Combine in medium or large steam bag:  
2 medium to large sweet potatoes (about 1 to 1¼ lbs total), peeled and cut into bite size pieces

1 medium Granny Smith apple, cored and diced into small (¾ to 1 inch) pieces

2 Tbsp. dried cranberries

1½ Tbsp. butter

1 rounded Tbsp. brown sugar

¾ tsp. salt

½ tsp. cinnamon

Seal bag and shake gently to combine ingredients. Pat ingredients into single layer. Place bag in microwave.

Cook on full power (900 watts) for 9 minutes (medium bag) or 8 minutes (large bag), or until sweet potatoes are tender. If needed, continue microwaving at 30-second intervals until sweet potatoes are tender.

Allow bag to stand for 1 minute before handling. Shake gently to distribute ingredients. Carefully open bag and serve.

### **One Minute Tomatoe Basil Sauce**

Makes 4 Servings

Prepare ½ pound spaghetti according to package instructions. Do not use steam bags. Drain spaghetti and set aside.

Combine in medium or large steam bag:

1 pint (about 2 cups) grape tomatoes (cut in half lengthwise) OR cherry tomatoes (quartered)

2 Tbsp. tomato paste OR ketchup

1 Tbsp. olive oil

1 tsp. balsamic vinegar

1 tsp. dried basil

½ tsp. garlic powder

¼ tsp. salt

Seal bag and shake gently to combine ingredients. Pat ingredients into single layer. Place bag in microwave.

Microwave on full power for 1 minute or until tomatoes are heated through.

Allow bag to stand for 1 minute before handling. Carefully open bag.

Leave tomatoes and sauce in bag. Add 2 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese to the bag. Seal bag and squeeze gently to release juice from tomatoes. Shake gently to combine ingredients. Pour sauce over cooked spaghetti and toss gently. Garnish as desired with additional grated Parmesan, red pepper flakes, and/or chopped fresh basil.

### **Steamed Asparagus Butter Sauce**

Makes 4 Servings

Combine in large steam bag:

1 pound asparagus, trimmed and cut into  
1½ -2 inch pieces

1 Tbsp. butter

½ tsp. cornstarch

¼ tsp. salt

Seal bag and shake gently to combine ingredients. Place bag in microwave.

Cook on full power (900 watts) for 3 minutes for crisp-tender asparagus.

Allow bag to stand for 1 minute before handling. Carefully open bag and serve.

### **Spinach Lasagna**

Serves: 8

1 medium onion, chopped

1 cup mushrooms, chopped

1 pound fresh spinach, chopped

1 cup ricotta cheese, part skim milk

1 cup cottage cheese, 1% fat

1 large egg

¼ cup parmesan cheese, grated

¼ cup parsley (fresh), chopped

3 cups spaghetti sauce

6 lasagna noodles, uncooked

1½ cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Using a 1-quart casserole, combine the onion, mushrooms and spinach. Cover and cook 4-5 minutes on High Power. Drain excess water. Using a separate bowl, combine the ricotta, cottage cheese, egg, parmesan, and parsley. Using a 2-cup measuring cup, heat the spaghetti sauce 4 minutes on Medium High (70%). Pour 1-cup of sauce on bottom of a 7"x 11" glass dish. Layer as follows: 3 lasagna noodles, ½ the

onion mixture, ½ the cheese, and 1-cup spaghetti sauce. Repeat the process, ending with the sauce. Cover with plastic wrap and heat 20-25 minutes on Medium Power (50%). Top with mozzarella cheese. Tent with foil for 10 min

For variety, add cooked Italian sausage to the sauce.

### **Tip:**

Heated sauce on a lower power level will cook the noodles. Always add the top layer of cheese during standing time.

### **Micro-Fried Veggies**

2 cups fresh vegetables

½ cup bread crumbs, seasoned

½ cup parmesan cheese

1 tsp. paprika

½ cup butter

Use your favorite vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower flowerets, sliced zucchini, button mushrooms, etc.

Combine the bread crumbs, parmesan cheese, and paprika together in a plastic sandwich bag. Shake to mix. Using a glass custard cup, melt the butter for 1 minute on medium low (30%).

Dip the vegetables, one at a time, in to the butter and then coat with crumbs.

Arrange the vegetables in a circle on the outer edge of a roasting rack or plate

Cook uncovered for 2 minutes on high power until tender crisp. Serve as a side dish or cooled and dipped in your favorite salad dressing.

Note: for evenly cooked vegetables, cut each kind of vegetable into equal sizes of your choice.

**Tips:** Use as little liquid as possible.

Reduce the surface area of food by leaving vegetables in big pieces. Cover your cooking container to hold in steam and heat and reduce cooking time. Cook vegetables until just crisp and tender. Don't overcook. Avoid peeling vegetables when possible. Many of the nutrients are found in and just below the surface of the skin.

## **Clean and Freshen your Microwave**

Mix ¼ cup white vinegar and 1 cup water in a small microwavable bowl and heat for 5 minutes. This will remove the lingering odors and loosen food spills. Wipe the interior of the microwave with a damp cloth. The turntable can also be removed and washed in hot soapy water.

## **Which to Buy**

For the majority of people a small basic model is quite adequate. If however, the microwave is going to be your sole method of cooking you may consider purchasing one with a built-in grill, or alternatively, a combination model which can act as either a small conventional oven or a microwave. It may also be useful to bear in mind that some models have larger and bolder markings than others (important if you have a visual impairment).

## **Choose Your Wattage**

Watt-age may vary from 500 to 1200. Microwave ovens with lower outputs will require longer cooking times, while higher outputs will require shorter times. Recommended wattage is 900 for most recipes and is really all you need.

## **Cost**

Microwaves are very economical to use. They use only about one quarter of the power required to run a conventional oven and cooking times are dramatically shorter. Food can also be cooked and served in one dish, which reduces clean up.

## **Cooking With Your Microwave**

Will quantity of food affect cooking times? Yes, this is one of the main differences between microwaves and conventional cooking. The more food you have in the microwave the longer it will take to cook. For example, two potatoes will take 2

minutes longer to cook than one (one cooking at 4 minutes).

## **What containers can I use?**

All of the following are suitable: baskets, wax paper, dish towels, paper plates, paper towels, plastic, oven glass, ceramic, pottery, heat resistant plastic, glass, plastic bags, small casserole dishes (used with a lid or kitchen paper) and microwave-safe labeled dishes.

## **Which type of container should I not use?**

Metal containers, anything with a metal trim, roasting tins, saucepans, foil containers, whip topping or butter containers and plastic grocery sacks.

## **Making Waves**

Although more than 90 percent of American households have a microwave oven, there are numerous misconceptions about how microwave ovens work. Microwave ovens don't produce heat, but use radio waves of energy that heat the food. That means the heat in a microwave oven is coming from the food itself. Because the food inside can cause the container to become hot, it is important to be careful when removing food containers from the microwave oven. In addition, keep in mind that it usually only takes a few minutes or less to reheat food that has already been cooked. Always handle dishes and open packaging carefully to avoid burns from the heat or the sudden release of steam. Overheating food could cause some plastic containers to melt. Yet, according to a former FDA food packaging expert, *"if you were to accidentally eat food containing melted plastic, you wouldn't suffer any harmful effects to your health, but your food probably wouldn't taste too appetizing."*

When cooking with children (the older, the better), make sure they are also familiar with these tips. In addition, suggest that

they use oven mitts to remove warm dishes from the microwave.

### **What is the Defrost setting for?**

This is a useful feature of microwaves, especially if you are short of time or have forgotten to take food from the freezer. Thawing takes only a short period of time and many prepared meals can be taken straight from the freezer and defrosted in minutes. Remember that some commercially produced meals can be cooked straight from the freezer without the need to defrost first.

### **Can I use my microwave to reheat?**

The microwave can reheat food efficiently in next to no time. It is especially useful for reheating individual portions/meals for one. It is important when reheating, that food is given the appropriate amount of time and power level (check your chart for levels).

### **What is meant by "Stirring"?**

Many recipes mention stirring or turning the food. This is simply to encourage a more even cooking when cooking soups, sauces and chocolate. Remember micro-waves have a hard time getting to the center of food.

### **What is "Standing Time"?**

It is important to remember that food continues to cook for a short time after you have removed it from the microwave. It is therefore recommended that food is allowed

to sit for 1-2 minutes (or as stated on recipe) before serving in order to ensure that the cooking process is complete.

Sources:

<http://www.ddmicrowaves.com>

<http://www.ziploc.com>

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**Go to the Extension Website** to sign up for the next classes with all new recipes:

<http://extension.usu.edu/JUAB/htm/fsne/online-class-registration>

February 17- "Fruits, desserts and how to thaw in the microwave".

March 17- "Meats and the use of foil"

April 21- "Breakfast and Snacks"

May 19- "Drying foods, herbs and flowers in the microwave".

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## **Blanching Guide for Vegetables**

| <b>Food</b>         | <b>Amount</b> | <b>Water</b> | <b>Time</b> | <b>Casserole size</b> |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Asparagus</b>    | 4 cups        | ¼ cup        | 3 minutes   | 1 ½ quart             |
| <b>Beans, green</b> | 1 pound       | ½ cup        | 4minutes    | 1 ½ quart             |

|   |         |         |           |           |
|---|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Broccoli</b>                           | 1 pound | ½ cup   | 5 minutes | 1 ½ quart |
| <b>Carrots</b>                            | 1 pound | 1/3 cup | 5 minutes | 1 ½ quart |
| <b>Cauliflower</b>                        | 1 head  | 1/3 cup | 5 minutes | 2 quart   |
| <b>Corn</b>                               | 4 cups  | None    | 3 minutes | 1 ½ quart |
| <b>Onion<br/>(quartered)</b>              | 4 med.  | ½ cup   | 2 minutes | 1 quart   |
| <b>Parsnips<br/>(cubed)</b>               | 1 pound | ¼ cup   | 2minutes  | 1 ½ quart |
| <b>Peas</b>                               | 4 cups  | ¼ cup   | 3 minutes | 1 ½ quart |
| <b>Snow peas</b>                          | 4 cups  | ¼ cup   | 3 minutes | 1 ½ quart |
| <b>Spinach<br/>(washed)</b>               | 1 pound | None    | 3 minutes | 2 quarts  |
| <b>Turnips<br/>(cubed)</b>                | 1 pound | ¼ cup   | 4 minutes | 1 ½ quart |
| <b>Zucchini<br/>(sliced or<br/>cubed)</b> | 1 pound | None    | 2 minutes | 1 ½ quart |

Blanching in the microwave is simple, full of color and flavor;  
 Clean and prepare vegetables for cooking; measure amounts to be blanched;  
 Cover and cook on 900 watts until crisp tender, 1 to 2 minutes;  
 Let vegetables stand, covered for 1 minute after cooking;  
 Place vegetables in ice water at once to stop cooking;  
 When they feel cool, spread on a towel to absorb excess moisture;  
 Package vegetables in freezer containers or plastic bags;  
 Seal, label, date and freeze.

## **NOTES**