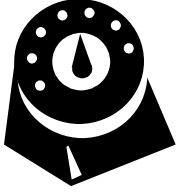


Tips for Preparing Foods in the Microwave

Minimum time



It is important to be careful when setting time in microwave cooking. Always start with the shortest time given in a recipe. It is easy to add extra time if the food needs more cooking, but you cannot subtract time from overcooked foods! Also, remember that foods may cook faster or more slowly than the time listed in recipe directions since different types of microwave ovens vary in maximum cooking wattage.

Standing Time

Sometimes you see the words **standing time** or **carry-over cooking** in microwave recipes. This means that some cooking will continue inside the food after the microwave oven has been shut off. The carry-over cooking can take place when the food is **removed** from the oven.

Plastic Wrap

If you use plastic wrap as a cover, it is a good idea to “vent” the plastic wrap. This can be done by rolling back one edge of the wrap from the side of the dish to form a narrow opening. Venting plastic wrap lets excess steam escape so the plastic wrap does not burst open.

Carefully take off covering. Always remove plastic wrap or a lid away from your face. Steam can cause burns.

Rotate Rotate Rotate Rotate

Have you ever read or heard the word **rotate** in connection with microwave cooking? To rotate means to turn the entire filled dish one quarter to one half turn to help the food cook more evenly.

To rotate one quarter turn, turn the dish until the side which was to the back of the oven is to the side. To rotate one half turn, turn the dish until the side which was to the back of the oven is to the front.

Inspect the food as it is cooling. If one area appears to be getting more done than another, rotate the dish. Rotating is usually done halfway through the total cooking time.

In a Stir



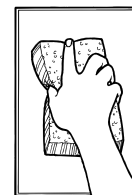
Many times in microwave cooking, the directions say “stir.” Have you ever wondered why?

Stirring helps to even the temperature in food and shortens the cooking time. Since microwave energy cooks from all directions, you should stir from the outside to the center of the dish. Ovens vary in the amount of stirring needed, but all cook more evenly with occasional stirring.

In recipes like chocolate pudding, stirring helps to evenly distribute cornstarch which makes the pudding thicken. Sometimes in things like gravy, the thickening ingredient that needs stirring in is flour.

Keep It Clean

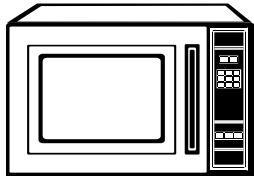
Keep your oven **clean**. Wipe the oven with a damp, soapy cloth after using. Microwave ovens clean very easily after each use; however, cooked-on-food needs special attention.



If splattered food is hard to remove, heat one cup of water in the microwave oven until the water steams. This will often soften the food so that it will easily wipe clean. Use a nylon net or nylon scrubber, if necessary, but **never** use anything that would scratch the oven.

Safety First

Microwave ovens are safe appliances. Companies that make microwave ovens must follow strict safety standards set by the United States government.



Of course, like any other household cooking appliance, a microwave oven needs to be used according to directions. You must also be very careful when dishes get hot from the food that is cooking within them. Keep pot holders close at hand and be very cautious around steam. It can burn you very quickly!

Power Settings

Your microwave may have one or as many as ten different power settings. You may see words and/or numbers to describe these settings on the oven. Usually microwave cooks use 100% power most of the time.

Many microwaves have an automatic defrost cycle. The power level for this is usually 30% or 50%. Other power levels are used for delicate foods when less microwaving energy helps give better cooking results.



Reheating Reminders

- Most foods reheat very well in the microwave oven.
- Try not to **recook** food when you **reheat**.
- Reheat food on less than 100% power to get evenly heated foods. If you do not have these power levels, reheat on 100% power for very short times. For example:
 - Reheat refrigerated main dishes at 50% power. Reheat each **1-cup serving** for 3-4 minutes on 50% power.
 - Reheat plates of cooked food at 70-80% power. Reheat **one average size serving of meat, vegetables or potatoes** for 3-4 minutes on 80% power.
 - Reheat bread product wrapped in paper towels or napkins on 30% power. Reheat **one roll wrapped in a paper napkin** for 30 seconds on 30% power.

Source: The Microwave Connection, North Central Regional Extension Publication No. NCR257.