



LESSON 3

USING YOUR MICROWAVE OVEN

Janice Woodard, Extension Specialist
Home Management and Equipment, Virginia Tech

Assisted by JoAnne Barton, Extension Specialist
Foods and Nutrition, Virginia Tech

Publication 356-062

Revised December 1984

MICROWAVING VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

A basic knowledge of how various types of food react to microwaves may help you understand why some foods taste better than others when microwaved and why some foods may need special attention. In this lesson, recipes are given only to illustrate a cooking principle. Recipes for specific dishes can be found in the myriad of microwave cookbooks available at libraries or wherever books are sold.

VEGETABLES

Superb! Excellent! Delicious! These adjectives are the usual reactions when people eat vegetables that have been cooked in the microwave oven. Quick cooking at the high power setting seems to help preserve the bright colors and fresh flavors of most vegetables. Very little water needs to be added—often the water clinging to leafy vegetables after they have been washed will be sufficient moisture. Although it's more convenient to add salt before cooking, don't. Salt dehydrates and toughens microwaved vegetables, so if you add salt, do so after cooking.

Generally, a covering of some kind—lid, wax paper or plastic wrap is advised. It helps keep the moisture from evaporating; also the vegetables cook more evenly. Often a vegetable's skin serves as a container—such as a baked potato or acorn squash. Be sure to pierce the skin of these before cooking—steam can build up inside and cause the item to burst.

Arrange the "toughest," thickest part of vegetables toward the outside of the dish or cooking container where they will cook faster. For example, broccoli stalks should be placed toward the dish edge and the heads placed toward the dish center. When cooking vegetables such as whole potatoes or individual squashes, arrange them in a circle instead of rows for more even cooking. Leave a space of about 1 inch between them. Turn individual vegetables over and rearrange them halfway through the cooking time.

Frozen vegetables may be cooked in their cardboard boxes—no need to add additional water. Just remember to remove part or all of the waxpaper covering and any seasoning packets. If you're using vegetables in boilable plastic cooking pouches, slit the bag to allow steam to escape. About 1-1/2 cups of bulk-pack frozen vegetables (home or commercially frozen) equals an 8 to 10-ounce package.

Vegetables vary in the amount of cooking time they require. The age, texture, freshness, size, shape, temperature, and variety can all affect cooking time. Whole vegetables will require a slightly longer cooking time than vegetables cut in pieces. For fast, even cooking, cut vegetables into small uniformly-shaped pieces.

Cooking times in most microwave cookbooks result in just-tender vegetables. If you prefer vegetables cooked to the very-tender stage, time will need to be increased. Of course, if you prefer vegetables even less done, time will need to

LD
5655
A762
no 356-062
VPI
Spec

be decreased. Be careful not to overcook vegetables. Allow for standing or carry-over cooking time. Keep vegetables covered to retain heat before serving. In cooking home frozen vegetables, follow the timing for commercially frozen vegetables in your microwave oven cookbook.

Dried vegetables like peas and beans need a long simmering period to become tender. This can be done in the microwave oven with the variable power setting at simmer, but no time is saved.

Note: Corn, beans, and other foods that have a skin-like covering may "pop" in the microwave oven. Such popping shows up most often when heating small quantities of the foods. To avoid this problem, place another item in the oven at the same time such as a cup of water, set the oven at a lower setting or allow standing time during the heating period.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Prepare at least one fresh vegetable, one frozen vegetable, and one

Seasoned Vegetable Tray

3 tablespoons butter or margarine
1/4 teaspoon onion salt
1/8 teaspoon thyme
1/8 teaspoon chopped parsley or
dried parsley flakes
1/2 pound fresh broccoli
1/2 small head cauliflower
1 medium zucchini
1 medium tomato, cut into wedges
1/8 cup Parmesan cheese

1. Combine butter, onion salt, thyme, and parsley in a 1 cup measure or bowl. Microwave on HIGH for 20 to 45 seconds or until melted. Set aside.
2. Trim and cut broccoli and cauliflower into florets. Alternately arrange groups of the florets around the edge

of a 10-inch serving platter with the flower ends toward the center of the dish. Slice zucchini and fill the center of the plate. Cover with plastic wrap.

3. Microwave on HIGH for 9 to 11 minutes or until vegetables are almost tender. Drain off excess liquid.
4. Arrange tomato wedges on vegetable platter.
5. Pour butter mixture over vegetables and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.
6. Microwave uncovered on HIGH for 1-1/2 to 2 minutes or until tomatoes are heated.

5 to 6 servings.

Variation:

Follow Seasoned Vegetable Tray recipe as directed except in step 2 place 2 packages (10 ounces each) Brussels sprouts on outside edge of a 10-inch round dish, place 2 medium sliced yellow summer squash toward inside, and 1 can (16 ounces) small whole beets (drained) in middle. Continue as directed in steps 3, 5, and 6.

Source: Used with permission of The Tappan Appliance Division

Blanching Vegetables for Freezing

Because of the variable results obtained from using microwave ovens to blanch vegetables, Virginia Tech does not recommend this practice.

FRUITS

Fruits are generally cooked covered. Pierce the skins of fresh fruits, or peel them before cooking. Cooking times are approximations, since the age, size, and shape of fruits can affect the amount of cooking time. The amount of sugar and spices in fruit recipes can be adjusted as desired.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Prepare one fruit dish in the microwave oven using a recipe in your microwave oven cookbook or the following recipe:

Glazed Grapefruit

Remove core and seeds from grapefruit halves; cut edges and between sections. Sprinkle each half with brown sugar; dot with butter or margarine. Microwave on HIGH--2 halves, 3 to 3-1/2 minutes; 4 halves, 4 to 5 minutes.

LET'S REVIEW

As you studied this lesson, you should have discovered the answers to the following questions:

True	False	Check the best response:
---	---	1. If you salt vegetables, do it before microwaving.
---	---	2. When baking sweet potatoes in the microwave oven, be sure to prick them before putting them in the oven.
---	---	3. Vegetables should be microwaved uncovered.

Acknowledgement: Subject matter in this publication was adapted from publications of the Florida, Missouri, Ohio, and New York Cooperative Extension Services and the Whirlpool Corporation.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
AND STATE UNIVERSITY
BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA 24061

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300