

From the microwave...

Fresh Veggies You Can Sauce Up In a Minute!

Summer vegetables—fresh from the garden, roadside farm stand or supermarket—are a feast for the eyes as well as the taste buds. In a glorious array of colors, shapes and succulent flavors, the abundance of nature's best fresh vegetables are just waiting to be enjoyed. The perfect "recipe" for preparing tempting vegetables that stand out in any crowd calls for a microwave and easy as one-two-three pourable pasteurized process cheese spread, hot from the microwave.

Fresh vegetables especially are a natural for the microwave:

- Preparation is fast and easy.
- Vegetables retain more color, flavor and nutrients because they require little or no water for cooking. Water beads left on after washing can be enough for some vegetables.
- You can serve several different vegetables at the same meal because each can be cooked quickly in separate containers.
- The microwave is especially appropriate for cooking vegetables in the summer since it doesn't add extra heat to the kitchen and shortens clean-up time.

The marriage of the microwave and fresh veggies provide the perfect setting for adding pasteurized process cheese spread to complement your favorite garden dish. Now you can "sauce it up in a minute" quickly and conveniently with this heat-and-serve, savory hot cheese sauce.

HOT CHEESY SAUCE IN A MINUTE

A super special instant cheese sauce calls for only a glass jar of pasteurized process cheese spread. To prepare, for best results start with cheese spread at room temperature. Remove lid and microwave jar on high 1 to 1½ minutes for an 8 oz. jar, rotating jar ½ turn every 30 seconds; 2 to 2½ minutes for a 16 oz. jar, stirring every 30 seconds. Remove jar from microwave, stir and pour hot sauce over vegetables.

Vegetables can star in their own right as the main attraction of meals or as an interesting side dish. Part of the fun is mixing and matching veggies to create new dishes like these.

Crunchy Vegetable Medley

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1½ cups diagonally-cut celery slices | 1 cup mushroom slices |
| 1 cup Chinese pea pods | 1 8-oz. jar pasteurized process cheese spread |
| 1 cup cauliflowerets | ½ cup cashews |
| 1 tablespoon margarine | |
| 1 cup red or green pepper strips | |

Combine celery, pea pods, cauliflowerets and margarine in 1½-quart casserole; cover. Microwave on High 3 to 4 minutes or until pea pods are crisp-tender. Add peppers and mushrooms; mix lightly. Microwave uncovered 2 minutes; drain. Place on serving plate. Microwave process cheese spread according to label directions. Pour over vegetables. Sprinkle with cashews.

4 to 6 servings

Summer Green Beans

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1 lb. fresh green beans | 1 8-oz. jar pasteurized process cheese spread |
| ½ cup water | ½ cup French fried onions |
| 1 cup red or green pepper strips | |

Combine beans and water in 1½-quart casserole; cover. Microwave on High 9 minutes. Add peppers; mix lightly. Microwave uncovered 4 minutes; drain. Place on serving plate. Microwave process cheese spread according to label directions. Pour over vegetables. Sprinkle with onions.

4 to 6 servings

Vegetables can be cooked to fit your personal taste: al dente, tender or soft. Keep these hints in mind when microwaving fresh vegetables.

- **Cooking time:** Time depends on quantity, piece size and type of vegetable being prepared. Check your user's manual for specific instructions.
- **Piece size:** Cut vegetables in uniform pieces for more even cooking in the microwave. Large or thick pieces take longer to cook than small ones.
- **Quantity:** As the quantity or volume of food increases, so does cooking time.
- **Arrange:** Vegetables not uniform in shape should be arranged with the firm, meaty parts, such as stalks, to the outer edge and tender parts (asparagus buds and broccoli flowerets) to the center of the dish.
- **Whole Unpeeled Vegetables:** Pierce vegetables like potatoes or squash to let steam escape.
- **Dishes:** Do not use metal or dishes decorated with metal in the microwave. Most glass, plastic and some ceramic dishes are microwave safe. Some products, like cheese spread, come in their own glass jar that can be used in the microwave. Keep in mind, though, that heat may transfer from the heated food to the container, so remember to use a hot pad. Some foods will not need dishes if they're microwaved in their own skins or natural "container" (except corn on the cob and acorn squash).
- **Liquid:** Tomatoes, onions and baking potatoes have a high moisture content and require no additional water for cooking. Broccoli, cauliflower and carrots require up to ¼ cup water per 2 to 2½ cups vegetables; green beans require more—about ½ cup water per 2 cups of beans.
- **Cover:** To prevent drying, spattering and promote even heating, cover vegetables with a glass or ceramic lid or use vented plastic wrap.
- **Stir:** By stirring from the outer edge of the dish toward the center, the heat will be more uniform. Stir vegetables once or twice during cooking time.
- **Salt:** Sprinkling salt directly on vegetables causes brown "freckles." For best results, salt vegetables after cooking or dissolve salt in a small amount of cooking liquid before adding vegetables.
- **Standing Time:** After removing vegetables from the microwave, let dish stand covered for several minutes to equalize the temperature.
- **Serve:** Check to make sure dish isn't hot to the touch. Drain any excess liquid from vegetables before topping them with hot pasteurized process cheese spread.

