

# Smart Cooking:



## Convenient Microwave Meals

Serving easily prepared, appetizing and nutritious meals every night, not just once or twice a week, is a major concern for most busy people. And that includes just about everybody. Luckily, today's cooks are smarter than ever. They know more about health and nutrition; they use a wide variety of foods prepared with taste and style, and do it faster and more conveniently than ever before.

But they have some help—like freezers, well stocked with top quality frozen vegetables, ready to be quickly thawed for salads, stir-fried to tender crisp goodness or used in soups, casseroles or even desserts. Their freezers also contain casseroles and other make-ahead dishes stored in cookware that can go directly from freezer to microwave.

Millions of smart Americans have discovered the speed and ease of microwave cooking. And with many families eating at different times, it's made meal preparation less of a hassle. Refrigerated meals can be warmed in just minutes in the microwave. And, the "keep warm" setting on some microwave ovens holds a meal at a ready-to-eat temperature.

Whether it's a regular weeknight family dinner or a special "company is coming," here is a menu that is loaded with flavor and color and nutrition. Best of all, it is easy to prepare with the aid of a microwave oven.

Green Salad (recipe not given)  
Chicken And Vegetables With Pasta  
Carrot Cake

Fresh grated ginger and cashews add flavor and crunch to this meal-in-a-dish that starts with Oriental-style frozen vegetables. Add a green salad that takes just minutes to assemble.

For a dessert, a packaged yellow cake mix is transformed with the addition of frozen carrots, cinnamon, raisins and nuts into a delicious carrot cake.

For those evenings when there is just no time to cook, rely on the casseroles and easy to assemble main dishes stocked in the freezer. This menu is based on a make-ahead frozen casserole that can be on the table in less than 30 minutes.

Marinated Bean And Cauliflower Salad  
Italian-Style Spinach And Sausage Casserole  
Microwave Streusel Apples

The casserole (not pictured) goes together quickly and with the microwave can be piping hot on the table just 15 minutes after it comes out of the freezer. A quick pass under the broiler—you can do this with glass-ceramic cookware—melts the mozzarella topping, giving a golden brown finish to the dish. While the casserole is cooking, toss the thawed vegetables with a favorite Italian dressing. Round out the meal with a dessert that tastes like it took a great deal of time. Microwave Streusel Apples (not pictured) takes just 7 minutes in the microwave.

## Microwave Tips

**Melt Unsweetened Chocolate:** Place a 1-ounce square in a small custard cup at MEDIUM (50%) 2 to 4 minutes, stirring as needed.

**Toast Coconut:** Spread 1/2 cup flaked coconut in a shallow microwave-safe dish. Microcook at HIGH (100%) 2-1/2 to 5 minutes, until golden, stirring every 30 seconds.

**Freshen Stale Snack Chips:** Place about 2 cups snack chips in a shallow microwave-safe baking dish. Microcook, uncovered, at HIGH 1 to 2 minutes.

**Cook Frozen Vegetables:** Place one package (8 to 10 oz.) in a microwave-safe dish. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons water (optional) and microcook at HIGH 4 minutes; stir vegetables, cover and microcook 1 to 4 minutes longer or until crisp.

### Chicken And Vegetables With Pasta

(Microwave Method\*)

- 6 teaspoons soy sauce, divided
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 3 teaspoons cornstarch, divided
- 8 ounces chicken breast, boned, skinned and thinly sliced
- 1 package (16 oz.) mixed oriental-style frozen vegetables\*\*
- 1/4 cup chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon dry sherry
- 1/4 teaspoon each sugar and grated ginger root
- 8 ounces fettuccine noodles, cooked and drained
- 1/4 cup halved cashews

In a microwave-safe 2-quart dish, combine 2 teaspoons soy sauce, vinegar and 2 teaspoons cornstarch. Toss with chicken to coat, let stand 5 minutes; add vegetables and microcook at HIGH (100%) 7 minutes. Combine chicken broth, sherry, remaining soy sauce and cornstarch, ginger and sugar. Microcook in 2-cup microwave-safe measure at HIGH 1 minute or until thickened. Pour sauce over chicken and vegetables; microcook at HIGH 3 minutes. Spoon chicken and vegetables over noodles on a 12-inch round microwave-safe tray; toss lightly and sprinkle with cashews. Makes 4 servings.

**Tip:** To reheat, microcook at HIGH 2 to 3 minutes.

\*Recipe developed for 600 to 700 watt microwave oven.

\*\*Other 16-ounce package of mixed vegetables can be substituted.

### Carrot Cake

(Microwave Method\*)

- 2 cups frozen carrot slices
- 2 to 3 teaspoons ground cinnamon, divided
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 1 package (18.25 oz.) yellow cake mix
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 1/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup each raisins and chopped nuts

Microcook frozen carrots at HIGH (100%) 3 minutes. Shred in food processor or blender or finely chop; set aside. Combine 1 teaspoon cinnamon and granulated sugar; mix well. Lightly grease microwave-safe tube dish; sprinkle with cinnamon mixture. In large bowl, combine cake mix, eggs, water, oil, brown sugar and 1 to 2 teaspoons cinnamon using a wire whisk\*\* to mix ingredients. Fold in carrots, raisins and nuts. Spoon into prepared tube dish. Microcook at MEDIUM (50%) 15 minutes turning pan 1/4 turn every 5 minutes. Microcook at HIGH 5 to 6 minutes or until wooden pick inserted near center comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes in tube dish. Turn cake out on plate. Drizzle icing over cake. Makes about 12 servings.

**Icing:** Combine 1 cup powdered sugar, 1-1/2 ounces softened cream cheese, 1 tablespoon milk and 1 teaspoon vanilla; mix well. Makes 1/2 cup.

**Tip:** Cake platter may be decorated with small fern leaves and daisies.

\*Recipe developed for 600 to 700 watt microwave ovens.

\*\*Wire whisk beats in less air than electric mixer and produces better results when microcooking.

### Marinated Bean And Cauliflower Salad

(Not Pictured)

- 1 package (10 oz.) or 2-1/2 cups frozen cauliflower, thawed, drained and cut into bite-sized pieces\*
- 1 package (9 oz.) or 2-1/4 cups frozen green beans, thawed and drained
- 1 medium tomato, seeded and chopped
- 1 green onion, diagonally sliced
- 1/2 cup bottled Italian dressing

Sauté cauliflower, stirring constantly, over high heat in non-stick pan about 5 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender. Cool slightly. Combine all ingredients in mixing bowl; mix well. Marinate, refrigerated, 1 to 2 hours to allow flavors to blend. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

\*About 2 cups when cut into bite-size pieces.

### Italian-Style Spinach And Sausage Casserole

(Microwave Method\*)

- 1 package (10 oz.) frozen chopped spinach
- 8 ounces Italian-style sausage
- 2 cups cooked rice
- 1-3/4 cups prepared Marinara sauce
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons melted butter or margarine

Microcook spinach in 2-quart covered glass-ceramic microwave-proof dish at HIGH (100%) 3 to 5 minutes; break apart and drain well. Crumble sausage and microcook in 1-quart microwave-safe dish at HIGH 3 to 4 minutes; drain drippings and discard. Layer rice, spinach and sausage in 1 1/2-quart microwave-safe dish. Pour sauce over sausage. Cover tightly and freeze. To serve, sprinkle with black pepper and microcook, uncovered, at HIGH 15 minutes. Sprinkle with mozzarella and microcook at HIGH 1 to 2 minutes. Top with Parmesan cheese and butter. Heat under broiler until golden and bubbly. Makes 4 servings.

\*Recipe developed for 600 to 700 watt microwave ovens.

### Microwave\* Streusel Apples

(Not Pictured)

- 1/2 cup uncooked quick oats
- 1/4 cup each packed brown sugar and chopped walnuts
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine
- 4 cups sliced Golden Delicious apples or Western Winter pears

Combine oats, brown sugar, walnuts, flour and cinnamon for streusel topping. Cut in butter. Place apples in microwave-safe 1-quart dish. Sprinkle streusel over apples. Microcook at HIGH (100%) 7 minutes. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

\*Recipe developed for 600 to 700 watt microwave ovens.