

Microwave chicken has crispy coating

AP — Yes, you can enjoy microwave oven-fried chicken and still get a crisp coating. It's not quite as crispy as pan-fried but much lower in fat and more healthful.

The secret? Coat only the meaty side of each piece and cook meaty side up. That way there's no coating on the bottom to absorb juices and become soggy. Cover with paper towels — not a cover, plastic wrap or waxed paper — so moisture can escape.

MICROWAVE CHICKEN DIJON
1 tablespoon margarine or butter
¼ cup fine dry seasoned bread crumbs
1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes
½ teaspoon paprika
2 whole medium chicken breasts (12 ounces each), skinned and halved lengthwise
1 tablespoon Dijon-style mustard

For coating, in a 1-cup measure cook margarine, uncovered, on 100 percent power (high) for 30 to 40 seconds or until melted. In a small mixing bowl combine bread crumbs, parsley flakes and paprika. Toss with melted butter.

Rinse chicken pieces and pat dry. On waxed paper brush pieces with mustard. Dip each piece into crumb mixture, coating the meatier side and leaving the other side uncoated. In a microwave-safe 8-by-8-by-2-inch baking dish arrange pieces, coated side up, on a rack, with meaty portions toward edges of the dish. Cover with paper towels. Cook on high for 8-10 minutes or until no pink remains, giving the dish a half-turn every 3 minutes. Makes 4 servings.

Nutrition information per serving: 167 cal, 21 g pro, 5 g carb, 4 g fat, 54 mg chol, 379 mg sodium. U.S. RDA: 62 percent niacin, 10 percent phosphorus.

We all know cooks who can dump ingredients in a bowl: a little of this, a little of that. They never follow a recipe and then come up with a fantastic product.

My mother says, "You'll know when it's right by the way it feels or looks, and you'll know when it's done by the way it looks." Well it works for her but not for me. My approach is more like a chemist or any artist. Instead of test tubes and palette, I use measuring cups, spoons and mixing bowls. For those of you who are like me, this column is for you.

Standard measuring equipment is the first step toward accuracy and a good end product. For dry foods use graduated measuring cups and spoons. To measure dry ingredients, lightly spoon the ingredient into the cup or measuring spoon, leveling it off. Then level the top with the flat edge of a knife or a metal or plastic spatula, to achieve a smooth surface.

Never pack dry ingredients except brown sugar. It needs to be packed firmly enough so that the sugar keeps the shape of the measuring cup when it's turned out.

MOST BRANDS of flour today are pre-sifted, so it's no longer necessary to sift before measuring. (Some recipes may call for flour and other ingredients to be sifted together after measuring, but this is done for uniform blending of the ingredients.) Sift the flour to lighten it, gently spoon it into the proper dry measuring cup and level. Don't shake the cup to level, as this packs the flour down and makes it heavy.

Exceptions to the no-sift rule are cake flour and powdered sugar, which are very soft and tend to pack



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down during storage. Sift, then measure.

Use a dry-measuring cup to measure shortening. Pack it lightly to eliminate air bubbles, then level. Lightly spoon shredded or grated cheese, nuts, soft bread crumbs or chopped fruit into a dry-measuring cup or measuring spoon until ingredients are even with the rim. Do not pack. For cereals and dry bread crumbs, pour into cup, then level.

When measuring a small amount of liquid, use the smallest measuring cup available for accuracy. For accuracy in measuring dry ingredients, use the size cup that holds the exact amount called for in the recipe. When measuring liquid or dry ingredients in amounts less than ¼ cup, use measuring spoons. (One-fourth cup equals 4 tablespoons and a dash equals one-16th teaspoon.)

To measure liquids correctly, place the cup on a level surface. Get

To measure dry ingredients, lightly spoon the ingredient into the cup or measuring spoon, letting it mound.

eye level with the marking you want to read, and fill the cup to that line. (For ease of reading, open your upper cabinet door, and place the cup on the shelf nearest eye level.)

TO MEASURE a small amount of a thin liquid, pour into the appropriate measuring spoon until full. For thick liquids, pour into the measuring spoon until full, then level. When measuring dried herbs, keep as close to level as possible.

Grandmother didn't necessarily

have an oven with temperature controls so she guessed or just knew when the product was done. Many of the failures in cooking are caused by using the wrong oven heat. Following are definitions of times that could appear in recipes: Very Slow, 250-275 degrees; slow, 300-325 degrees; moderate, 350-375 degrees; hot, 400-425 degrees; very hot, 450-475 degrees, and extremely hot, 500-525 degrees.

Many cookbooks have wonderful, useful information on weights and measures, substitutions for food, herb charts and helpful hints. Careful attention to the basics will give your recipe the best possible start, for results that are consistently successful. Recipes from cookbooks are tested with accurate measurements of ingredients.

While the chemist in you measures accurately, let the artist in you take over in planning meals, mixing colors to give eye appeal. Select unflavored or bland foods and some with zip or tartness and serve soft foods with chewy crisp foods. Variety makes meals interesting. Use different sizes and shapes and have both hot and cold foods in a meal. And, of course, plan meals that are nutritious and healthy.

30 percent power cooks pork chops

AP — For even doneness, cook pork chops in your microwave oven on 30 percent power, medium-low. The sauce cooks in minutes on high.

TOMATO-SAUCE PORK CHOPS
3 pork loin chops, cut ¾-inch thick (1¼ to 1½ pounds total)
1½ cups tomato sauce
8-ounce can stewed tomatoes
1½ teaspoons cornstarch
¼ teaspoon lemon-pepper seasoning
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon dried marjoram, crushed
2 tablespoons sliced pitted ripe olives
thickly sliced green onion

Trim separable fat from chops; sprinkle chops lightly with salt. In a microwave-safe 8-by-8-by-2-inch baking dish arrange chops with meatiest portions facing the outside of the dish. Cover with microwave-safe plastic wrap, turning back one corner to allow steam to escape. Cook on 30 percent power (medium-low) 10 minutes. Turn chops over and rotate dish a half-turn. Cook, covered, on medium-low 10-12 minutes more or until chops are tender and no pink remains. Drain juices from baking dish. Cover chops to keep warm.

For sauce, in a 2-cup glass measure combine tomatoes, cornstarch, lemon-pepper seasoning, garlic powder and marjoram. Cook, uncovered,

Home-style swiss steak nice to cook

AP — Home-style cooking is making news as cooks of all ages rediscover meat loaf, mashed potatoes and other favorites loved at Mom's table. One recipe to enjoy is this swiss steak. The recipe is easy to prepare, needs no attention while cooking and fills the kitchen with a wonderful real-food aroma.

DEVILED SWISS STEAK
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon dry mustard
1½ to 2 pounds beef bottom round steak, cut 1-inch thick
2 tablespoons cooking oil
1 cup water
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon instant beef bouillon granules
two 4-ounce cans whole mushrooms, drained

In a small bowl combine flour, mustard and pepper. Sprinkle half the flour mixture over one side of steak; cover with clear plastic wrap and pound with flat side of meat mallet or edge of heavy saucer. Repeat on other side with remaining flour mixture. Discard plastic wrap. In a large skillet brown steak on both sides in hot oil. Drain off fat. Combine water, Worcestershire sauce and bouillon granules; pour over steak. Spread mushrooms over steak. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and cook over low heat 1½ to 2 hours or until tender. Transfer steak and mushrooms to a serving platter. Skim fat from juices; spoon some of juices over steak. Pass remaining juices. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Nutrition information per serving: 255 cal, 28 g pro, 4 g carb, 13 g fat, 82 mg chol, 269 mg sodium. U.S. RDA: 14 percent riboflavin, 21 percent niacin, 19 percent iron.

In a large skillet brown steak on both sides in hot oil.

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