

# IN THE KNOW ABOUT NUTRITION

Volume: 2019 Issue: 8

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## *Making the Most of Microwave Ovens*

Microwave ovens have created a more convenient and easy way to defrost, cook, and reheat food. For this reason, it is not surprising that about 90% of American kitchens contain a microwave. Because microwave ovens are used often, it is important to know how to properly use them to ensure food safety.



### **Is food healthy once it is microwaved?**

Microwaves cook food fast while using little water. By steaming vegetables in the microwave, much of the color and nutrients are preserved.

A way to steam vegetables in the microwave is to first wash them and pat them dry. Then, cover tightly in a microwave-safe bowl and cook it for the same amount of time it would take to steam.

It may worry some people that microwaves emit radiation, however, they emit similar radiation as a laptop and cell phone. The level of exposure also drops the further you move away. The Food and Drug Administration carefully regulates the amount of radiation emitted to ensure the use of microwaves remain safe and you can continue to use a healthful and convenient cooking method.

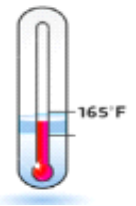
### **Safely defrosting, cooking, and reheating**

The only way to ensure foods are at a safe internal temperature is to measure them with a thermometer in the thickest parts of food. It may even be beneficial to take the temperature of various parts of the food. There are a few things that can be done to eliminate cold spots in food where harmful bacteria can grow. Stirring and turning food containers midway as well as allowing food

to stand for cooking to be completed are ways to ensure proper food temperature.

When thawing food, make sure to press the defrost button on the microwave rather than only using a specific time for heating. Food may enter into a temperature that allows harmful bacteria to grow if not monitored. Food should be removed from packaging when defrosting to make sure harmful chemicals from non-microwavable containers do not leak into food. If you are defrosting meat, poultry, egg casseroles, and fish, cook immediately after defrosting to keep harmful bacteria from multiplying. When reheating, food should be covered in a microwave-safe container to allow for even heating

The following are safe minimal internal temperatures that should be taken with a food thermometer as determined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA):

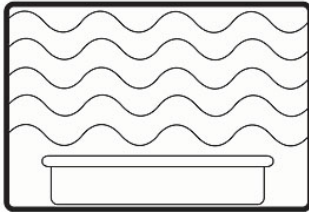


Food	Temperature
Beef, Lamb Roast	145°
Ground Beef	160°
Chicken, Turkey	165°
Fish	145°
Egg Dishes	160°
Leftovers	165°

## Microwave containers and wraps

Only use safe microwaveable containers such as thick, non-decorative glass, wax paper, parchment paper, and undyed white paper towels. Plastic containers and one-use containers can warp and possibly pass harmful chemicals into food. Thin plastic storage bags, brown

paper or plastic grocery bags, newspapers, or aluminum foil should never be used in the microwave. A symbol on a container with squiggly lines such as the one below indicates that it is safe for microwave use.



## Important information to know about your microwave

There are many different types of microwaves and not all work the same. Different wattages of microwaves affect the cooking time of foods. Some directions will list multiple cooking times for different types of wattages. For this reason, it is important to make sure you know what kind of microwave you own. As with all cooking methods, the only way to be sure food is at an acceptable temperature is to measure it with a thermometer.

If you are not sure of the wattage of your microwave, you can do one of the following:

- Read the instruction manual that came with your microwave
- Look to see if there is a sticker inside of the microwave door that lists the wattage
- Visit [www.microwaveovenfacts.com](http://www.microwaveovenfacts.com) for information about your microwave
- Contact the manufacturer

References:

[www.FDA.gov](http://www.FDA.gov)

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

[www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov)

[www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

## Parmesan Herb Microwave Spaghetti Squash

1 spaghetti squash, halved and seeds removed

Water

1 cup shredded parmesan cheese

½ basil, fresh and thinly sliced

2 tablespoons olive oil

½ teaspoon garlic powder

¼ teaspoon ground pepper

1. Wash spaghetti squash. Cut in half and scoop out seeds. Place flesh side down in microwavable dish.
2. Fill the dish with about 1 inch of water surrounding spaghetti squash
3. Place dish in the microwave and cook for 10-15 minutes, until squash is tender.
4. Remove squash from pan (carefully! It's hot!) Using a fork, scrape the inside of the squash to create spaghetti-like pieces.
5. Mix spaghetti squash, parmesan cheese, fresh basil, olive oil, garlic powder, ground pepper, and salt to taste. Freeze extra to enjoy later. Optional: Use spaghetti sauce on top of spaghetti squash shreds.

Cook time: 15 minutes

Yield: Meals for the week

Adapted from Joyful Healthy Eats

## Microwave Spicy Salmon

1 single portion salmon filet

Salt and pepper

2 tablespoons mayonnaise

2 tablespoons sriracha sauce

2 lemon slices

1 tablespoon parsley

1. Rinse salmon filet with cold water and pat dry.
2. Place salmon skin side down in a microwave-safe container. Season with salt and pepper.
3. In a small bowl, combine mayonnaise and sriracha sauce. Spread mixture on top of the filet.
4. Add lemon slices and parsley to cover salmon filet.
5. Cover the dish tightly with microwave-safe plastic wrap or a Ziplock steamer bag. Microwave fish for 3.5 minutes. Check center of filet for doneness with a fork.

Cook time: 5 minutes

Yield: 1

Adapted from Savory Sweet Life

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