

# *Creative Ways to Use a Microwave*

## **Get more juice from citrus fruit**

Gently warm lemon, lime or orange on full power for 10 seconds before squeezing.

## **Plump and soften raisins and other dried fruit**

Place fruit in small bowl; sprinkle with water. Cover tightly with plastic wrap; microwave on full power for 30 - 40 seconds.

## **Peel peaches or tomatoes**

Bring water to boil in deep microwavable bowl. Drop tomatoes or peaches in water for 5-10 seconds each. The skin will loosen and peel off easily.

## **Blanch fresh vegetables before freezing**

Wash and chop, peel or slice vegetables. Place in microwave-safe bowl. Add small amount of water, cover and microwave on full power 3 - 4 minutes per pound, stopping to stir and re-arrange halfway through. Drain; immediately plunge vegetables into ice-cold water to quickly cool. Drain again; pack vegetables in zippered storage bags and freeze.

## **Toast coconut**

Spread coconut in thin layer on microwave-safe pie plate or paper plate. Microwave on full power for 2 - 3 minutes or until light golden brown. Watch closely to prevent over-browning.

## **Blanch almonds**

Microwave cup of water until it boils. Place almonds in separate cup. Add enough boiling water to cover almonds. Microwave on full power 30 seconds. Drain and rub off almond skins.

## **Toast sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, sliced or slivered almonds**

Place layer of seeds or nuts on microwave-safe plate sprayed with non-stick cooking spray. Microwave seeds 3 - 4 minutes and nuts 3 - 5 minutes on full power. Stop to toss gently or stir often. Brown very lightly – they will continue to darken as they cool.

## **Soften brown sugar**

Place hardened brown sugar in plastic bag. Add slice of soft white bread or quarter of fresh apple. Close bag tightly and microwave on full power 20 seconds. Discard bread or apple and stir sugar.

## **Liquefy honey that has crystallized and hardened**

Microwave at 50% power, stopping to check at 15-second intervals. Crystallized honey will liquefy quickly. Total time depends on the amount and condition of honey.

## **Make croutons and dry breadcrumbs**

Microwave 4 cups bread cubes or bread crumbs 5 - 7 minutes at full power.

## **Soften tortillas**

Loosely wrap 3 - 4 corn or flour tortillas in waxed paper. Microwave on full power 15 - 25 seconds.

## **Freshen chips and snack crackers**

Microwave, uncovered, about one minute on full power.

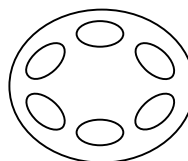
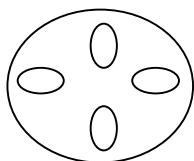
## **Cook healthier bacon**

Use microwave bacon grill designed so that fat drains away as meat cooks.

## Veggies in the Microwave

When cooking fresh vegetables in the microwave, you will have more success if you remember a few simple things:

- ✓ The more dense the vegetable (think carrot, beet, or potato), the more water you will need to cook it. The more tender the vegetable (think spinach), the less water you need.
- ✓ Most vegetables are best when cooked to tender-crisp. Put them in microwave safe container, add small amount of water, and cover them with a lid or microwave safe plastic wrap (make slit in plastic wrap for steam to escape). Stir halfway through cooking time to ensure even cooking. Do not add salt during cooking as it might cause dark, tough spots.
  - ✗ Leafy veggies – 3 to 6 minutes
  - ✗ Asparagus, broccoli, green beans – 7 to 10 minutes per pound
  - ✗ Carrots 10 to 12 minutes per pound
  - ✗ Beets, boiled potatoes – 15 minutes
- ✓ Pierce the skins of whole vegetables such as potatoes or squash to allow the steam to escape and prevent exploding.
  - ✗ Pierce skin of potato, sweet potato, or yam a few times with a fork. Place a paper towel in microwave. Lay potato in the center of oven and cook on full power about 4 minutes for 1; 12 to 14 minutes for 4; 18 to 20 minutes for 6 (or until tender). Test with fork. For more than one potato at a time, select potatoes that are uniform in size.
  - ✗ Arrange potatoes in a circle around the outside edge of the plate, at least one inch apart. Finish by wrapping in foil, shiny side in, and let stand up to 30 minutes.



## Cheesy Vegetable Soup

2 cups frozen broccoli, cauliflower, carrot mixture  
1 cup peeled, cubed potato  
½ cup chopped onion  
½ cup chopped celery

1 can (15 oz) chicken broth  
1 can condensed cream mushroom soup  
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

In 2 quart casserole dish, combine frozen mixed vegetables, potato, onion, and celery. Cover and microwave on high for 7 – 10 minutes, or until vegetables are tender, stirring once. Mash vegetables slightly if desired. Mix in remaining ingredients. Re-cover and cook another 6 – 9 minutes or until cheese melts and mixture can be stirred smooth. Serves 4

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact 1-800-221-5689 or visit online at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/>. In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800)795-3572.

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