

Microwave Ovens and Food Safety

Microwave oven has become an essential kitchen tool offering not just convenience, but also efficiency and speed. When using the microwave for cooking or reheating, special care should be taken to ensure that food is cooked evenly at the desired temperature. This is important to make sure that food is free of bacteria and other microorganisms that could cause illnesses.

COOKING FOOD IN A MICROWAVE OVEN

Foods which are high in water/moisture content, like fruits, vegetables, ground meat and poultry are best cooked on high power. Eggs, cheese and solid meat should be cooked on reduced temperature to prevent protein denaturation (toughening of proteins). Large meat cuts and portions should be cooked on medium power (50%) for long duration to allow the cuts to cook from outside to inside.

MAKING SURE FOOD GETS COOKED

Microwaves penetrate food to a depth of 1-1½ inches only. In cuts of meat that are thicker than that and stuffed poultry, the waves do not reach the center, which makes cooking foods with thicker layers not advisable.

IS MICROWAVE OVEN USE SAFE?

Yes, heating or cooking food in the microwave is safe, as long as done correctly. Using proper temperature to cook is important. It is also better to use deboned meat with a bit of water to help it cook. Food should be heated until it steams. Partially cooked foods promote bacterial contamination, increasing chances of infection. Correct utensil use is also important.

SAFE AND UNSAFE CONTAINERS TO USE IN MICROWAVE OVEN

Always use food containers labelled “safe for microwave use”. Unprinted paper plates, towels, napkins can also be used safely. Avoid margarine tubs, yogurt cartons, plastic food wrap, brown paper bags, newspapers, metal utensils and foam insulated cups, plates and bowls. For aluminum foil and styrofoam, read the microwave manual for safe use.

HOW TO KEEP THE MICROWAVE CLEAN

It is important to keep the microwave clean to avoid any food contamination. To clean, first unplug the microwave oven. Wipe any spills with dampened cloth or paper towel. To remove odour and food residue, take 6 tbsp. baking soda with 1 cup water or juice of ½ a lemon with 1 cup water and microwave the liquid until it boils. Keep the liquid inside and do not open the door until the mixture cools. The steam will loosen the food residue which can then be wiped off with a soft cloth.



References:

https://www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Microwave_Ovens_and_Food_Safety.pdf

