



Slaving over a hot stove is not for Jennipher

Christmas with the Microwave Queen

JENNIPHER MARSHALL-JENKINSON threw away most of her saucepans 30 years ago. And yet she cooks up feast after feast

WOULD you like help preparing Christmas dinner and all the extra food that goes with Christmas festivities? How about saving money while doing it and, most importantly, having your food cooked quickly, efficiently, with the minimum of washing up and, in the case of vegetables, retaining more nutrients than by any other cooking method?

Then make more use of your microwave

oven! That's the advice of Berkshire resident and Chairman of Britain's Microwave Technologies Association (MTA) Jennipher Marshall-Jenkinson, who has been a microwave cooking expert for three decades.

Jennipher took over running the MTA back in 2003, on her return to the UK from a five year stay in Australia, where she got married and her sons were born. Whilst living there, ▶



No soggy vegetables: they arrive at table looking appealing and are full of nutrients

and working as the Food Editor for a 'Nature and Health' magazine, Jennipher was asked if she knew anything about 'microwave cooking'.

"Of course", she replied, knowing that microwaves had been used extensively in Australian homes for years, with consumers wanting a good home cooked meal, quickly without the heat of a hot oven adding to the heat of an Australian summer.

Jennipher was given the job of creating Australia's newest magazine – 'The Australian Microwave Magazine' – and helped to set up the highly successful MICA (Microwave Information Council of Australia).

She put away all her saucepans (and hasn't used any since!) and for the next few years cooked all the food for her family in her microwave oven.

She recalls: "Some dishes worked, others didn't. Knowing how to make the most out of all the appliances in your kitchen is most important. After all, you wouldn't boil a leg of lamb, or grill Yorkshire puddings."

So after proving unequivocally that microwaves are safe, she has spent her time, both in Australia and back in the UK, persuading everyone through her radio and television appearances as well as publishing lots of microwave cooking features in various magazines, to use microwaves to cook the dishes that work well in them. These include vegetables, fish, sauces, cakes, eggs and breakfasts. The list could go on; not to mention heating up one of the £2.6 billion worth of microwaveable ready meals that were purchased in the UK last year, as well as the occasional cup of coffee or bowl of soup.

With government assistance, she has been able to commission independent,

"Vegetables cooked correctly in a microwave retain 85% more nutrients than if they were cooked conventionally"

unbiased research, which has also proven unequivocally that microwaves are safe to use, environmentally friendly, cook food properly and are good value too! (In the history of their use, there hasn't been an accident known of microwave leakage through the door or walls of an oven.) Any that you may have heard about are purely myths.

A saving of approximately £1.50 per week can be made just by cooking the vegetable part of your family's meals in a microwave oven instead of a conventional electric cooker. For example, for an average family of four, who use their conventional cooker to boil our saucepans of vegetables on the top of the stove for 15 to 20 minutes, and grill or fry meat or fish for 10 minutes, the associated cost is approximately 30p. To cook the same meal in a microwave oven would cost just 9p.

That's a saving of two thirds of the energy you would normally use to cook your family's meals and two-thirds off your associated fuel bills – not to mention the saving of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. Recent research has also found that compared with cooking on top of the stove in a saucepan of boiling water, vegetables cooked correctly in a microwave oven retain 85% more nutrients than if they were cooked conventionally.

Jennipher hasn't always been a microwave cook; after studying 'Home Economics' and the 'Technology of Food' at University, the first part of her career was spent with the National Dairy Council; she has promoted the use of English butter in cooking ever since.

After marrying, she also helped to set up Britain's largest digital imaging company – DirekTek Distribution Limited, based in High Wycombe where she was

company secretary and finance director.

She has been short listed by the small business bureau as 'Business Woman of the year', been Vice Chair of the Hillingdon Business Women's Network, Secretary for the UKHEF, in addition to being Finance Officer and Chairman of the UK's MTA (Microwave Technologies Association).

Now that her children have grown into fit and healthy adults, Jennipher has finally got the time to pursue her love of travel and tasting food from around the world. Since 2006, she has become a Director of two travel companies – 'Chile Inside Out' and 'Good Mountain Guides'; she is still a Scout leader with a local Scout troop and an Ambassador with the charity 'Amos Trust' that helps street children around the world. Staying fit and healthy is also a priority, so as a health member at the Stoke Park Club she frequently makes good use of all their gym facilities.

Her love of cooking using microwaves still continues to grow, with her latest cook-book (now in it's third re-print), 'Microwave Magic – The heart of 21st Century cooking' winning 'The People's Book Prize'.

TAKE IT EASY

Life doesn't appear to be slowing down for Jennipher. Her extended family will be round for Christmas lunch once again and she will certainly be using some of these tips to help make its preparation just that bit easier.

So, if you turn your nose up at a microwave cooked meal, think they 'nuke' all the goodness out of your dishes, just generally ruin food when any thing is heated or cooked in them – or even give off radiation when they're switched 'on', so you don't go near them when they're heating up something – think again!

They are a great 21st Century cooking method – and fantastic addition to any kitchen.

Christmas day should be calm and relaxed for everyone – including Mum.

So, the more preparation that can be done in advance the better. Remember, cooking some of your favourite dishes in the microwave oven isn't cheating – it's good common sense.

No shame – all gain! Time is short... so spend more of it with family and friends instead of slaving over steaming saucepans!



Christmas meals in Australia's summer soon teaches you that cooking quickly makes sense

TRY SOME OF THESE TIPS:

All hints and tips are based on a 900watt microwave oven

FANTASTIC CRISPY ROAST POTATOES

Cook them in a fraction of the time it takes normally – part-cooking in the microwave before roasting.

For six people, peel 750 gms potatoes and cut each into 6 wedges, rinse under cold running water then place them in a large microwavable dish. Cover with a well fitting lid or cling wrap and cook on HIGH power for 6 to 7 minutes until almost cooked through. Give the dish a good shake half way through the cooking time.

Meanwhile, heat up 4 tblspns of goose fat, lard or oil in a large roasting tin at 225°C, gas mark 7 until really hot.

For a really crispy crust on the outside and fluffy inside, after part-cooking, gently toss the potatoes in 1 – 2 tblspns of semolina. Gently transfer them into the hot fat and roast for 30 minutes, until golden brown, basting with some of the hot fat during cooking.



BROCCOLI AND BRUSSELS

Remember that more nutrients are retained in microwave cooked vegetables than in any other cooking method – broccoli and Brussels sprouts are no exception, they bounce with iron and Vitamin C – so preserve these nutrients.

Place 25 gms butter in a large microwave proof dish with 50 gms blanched almonds. Cook on full power for 3 to 4 minutes until the almonds brown slightly, giving the dish a quick shake or stir half

way through the cooking time. Remove the almonds from the dish and set aside.

Add 750g prepared and well washed broccoli or Brussels sprouts to the dish, give them a good stir to cover them with the remaining butter. Cover the dish with a well fitting lid and cook on HIGH power for 6 to 7 minutes until almost cooked through, stir in the almonds, re-cover dish and leave to stand for 3 -to 4 minutes, to complete their cooking time.

CHRISTMAS PUDDING

A whole Christmas pudding will take one to two hours to steam and re-heat on the top of the stove – but if cut into individual portions, each slice will only take 1 minute to heat up in the microwave oven.

A great way to not only save energy but a hot steamy kitchen as well!

If you have a favourite Christmas pudding recipe – cook it in the microwave oven. It will only take 7 to 9 minutes on a MEDIUM HIGH power setting (70%) for a serving for four people.



MINCE PIES

Mince pies are great served warm – but they only need 15 seconds for each one. Any longer and they will start to re-cook and the pastry will go soggy. ▶



Yes, a Christmas cake ring like this can be made in the microwave

CHRISTMAS CAKE

Your favourite Christmas cake recipe can also be cooked in the microwave oven. As it's a dense mixture, cook it in a microwavable ring mould, on a MEDIUM power (60%) for 10 - 12 minutes, make sure that a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean to ensure it is cooked thoroughly - if not, cook for an additional 30 seconds at a time until cooked through. Remember though that by cooking it so quickly it won't brown as it would do if cooked conventionally - so always use dark brown sugar to help colour it.

Instead of icing, cover the cake with a little honey while the cake is still hot, as the honey cools it will glaze the cake with a beautiful shiny coat.



LEMONADE OR MORNING PICK UP

Heat together 1 cup of water, a large piece of lemon peel, and 1 - 2 teaspoons of sugar on HIGH power for 2 minutes, until the sugar has dissolved and the water is steaming. Stir in the juice of a lemon. Serve immediately hot or pour into an ice cube filled glass to serve chilled. Stir in a teaspoon of fresh chopped mint for a real lift. Delicious!

THE ULTIMATE JUICER

Get more juice from oranges and lemons by putting them one at a time in the microwave oven on HIGH power for 30 seconds before juicing - you'll find there's double the amount of juice inside and the juice is easier to squeeze out.

BRING BREAD BACK TO LIFE

Microwaves can often bring foods back from the brink of being thrown away. Slightly stale dough-based foods, such as bread rolls, doughnuts or pastries may be returned to their original fresh condition, by heating one at a time on HIGH power for 10 seconds each.



FOR THE BEST TASTING JAM EVER

Make it in the microwave oven, in a fraction of the time it takes normally. Just stir equal quantities of soft fruit and sugar together and heat up to jam setting point in a large microwavable cooking dish. Stir frequently during cooking and carefully spoon into sterilised jars before sealing. Great for making small quantities, even better for last minute home made gifts.

MAKE CHEAP 'PLONK' DRINKABLE

Cheap red wine can be as tasty as knocking back neat vinegar. But with a bit of microwave magic, the cheapest wine can be made to taste better - helping to smooth out the flavour and remove the chill. Rid the wine of any bitter after-taste by pouring half a bottle of red wine into a heat proof glass jug and heat for 30 seconds.

Better still at this time of year, you can be indulgent - even if you're on your own. After heating a cup full of red wine for 1 minute in a microwave proof container, stir in a pinch of cinnamon and mixed spice, and the juice and finely grated rind of half an orange. Heat again until it steams, stir again - and enjoy all the tastes and smells that are associated with this time of year.

RIPEN THAT AVOCADO - IF IT'S NOT QUITE READY TO BE EATEN

Fruit like avocados, pears and mangoes can be ripened quickly, just place in the centre of the microwave oven and heat through on MEDIUM power for 30 seconds. Leave to stand for a couple of minutes, but use the same day, otherwise, they will over ripen.



MAKE MORE OF YOUR COFFEE

If you have left over coffee made with ground beans, keep it in the refrigerator, heat 1 cup or mugful at a time on HIGH power for 2 minutes. Result... fresh tasting coffee, instantly.



REFRESH CRISPS OR TORTILLA CHIPS

Spread them on a microwave proof plate. Heat for 30 seconds. Make them into a Mexican inspired tasty snack by covering them with some grated cheese and a dusting of paprika pepper - then heat on HIGH power for 1 - 2 minutes, until the cheese melts. Add a side of some soured cream and mashed avocado - and there's lunch!

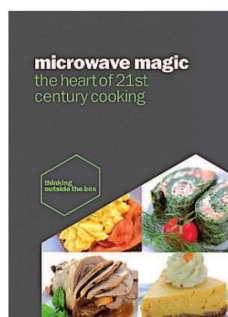
TOAST NUTS AND COCONUT

Toasted desiccated coconut, chopped or sliced nuts and seeds (e.g. sesame) not only add extra colour but are great for all sorts of toppings. Spread the coconut, nuts and/or seeds on to a glass oven-proof plate. Heat on HIGH power for 2 to 3 minutes, until they start to brown. Stir frequently during cooking so that they don't burn, and leave to cool before using.

TO SKIN TOMATOES OR PEPPERS

Simply place 2 or 3 halved tomatoes or peppers on an oven proof plate, heat for 30 seconds, you will find the skins shrivel, enabling them to be gently peeled away from the flesh with a fork.

Fill with roughly chopped olives or humous for an instant tasty starter. ♦



Get a signed copy of Jennipher's book

If you would like the opportunity to buy one of Jennipher's prizewinning cook books, 'Microwave Magic - The Heart of 21st Century cooking', then send your name and address to the "Microwave Technologies Association", 23 Earlsfield, Holyport, Berkshire, SL6 2LZ, with a cheque for £12.95 (this includes £2.95 P & P), made payable to Microwave Technologies Association. If you would like the book dedicated to anyone, please let Jennipher know and she will sign and dedicate it for you.