



the
classic
1000
microwave
recipes

sonia allison



lay-flat binding

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Introduction

Since the mid-seventies, microwave cooking has become part and parcel of my busy everyday life and has given me more flexibility and freedom in and out of the kitchen than I ever imagined possible. Speedy, cool, hygienic, reliable and undemanding, the microwave works like a charm, cooks like a dream and uses only minimal electricity, a major consideration in times of rising energy costs and the need to make savings where we can.

It is an accepted fact that microwave ovens cannot completely replace conventional ovens and hob but they do go a long way towards it. Used to full capacity, a microwave can become the most efficient, valued and respected piece of equipment in your kitchen, and my intention in writing this book is to put together a package of innovative recipes in addition to old favourites, proving that a wide range of dishes can be microwaved successfully. I have sometimes given an alternative method of cooking some of the ingredients used in a specific recipe to save time, or suggested finishing off a dish under the grill (broiler) to crisp skin or brown a topping. In these instances, your microwave will work in perfect harmony with your conventional oven.

I have to admit that some dishes are not at their best if given the microwave treatment. Yorkshire pudding collapses. Pancakes fare no better, though they reheat to perfection. Soufflés and éclairs fail with irritating predictability. Meringues just about work but take so long you might just as well bake them conventionally and have done with it. And deep-frying is taboo because it is impossible to control the temperature of the fat or oil.

Some people still regard the microwave as something to use only for defrosting and reheating. A pity, because they're missing out. Many grow to love microwave cookery and soon come to understand and appreciate its seemingly magical properties ... Over to you.

Guide to Microwave Cooking

What are Microwaves?

Based on the principle of radar, microwaves are a form of energy that comprises electro-magnetic, short-length, non-ionising, high-frequency radio waves at the top end of the radio band. They are close to infra-red rays but not as powerful and the frequency is 2450 megahertz (MHz), which translates into literally millions of cycles or vibrations per second. The word 'hertz' comes from Heinrich Hertz, the scientist who first discovered the nature of the waves.

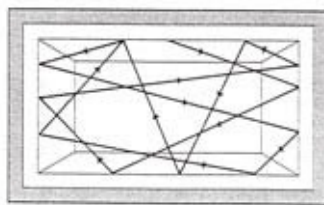
Inside the cavity of a microwave oven, with its extraordinary number of compulsory cut-outs and safety devices, the microwaves are completely confined and are unable to leak out and attack you. In any event, microwaves are an altogether different kettle of fish from X-rays, gamma-rays and ultra-violet rays, which are ionising and known to cause dangerous cellular alterations to the body with minimal or no temperature change.

Microwaves have none of these effects and, more importantly, are non-cumulative. Leaks can occur only if the oven is worn, damaged or mishandled, and for safety reasons it should be checked from time to time by a qualified engineer to make sure the door fits snugly, the seal around the door is secure, and the hinges are not rusty.

If the door front fractures, stop using the oven at once and request a service call as soon as possible. So what would happen if one were, briefly, exposed to microwaves? The answer is a burn, which is never pleasant. Therefore look after your oven, keep it serviced and clean it regularly.

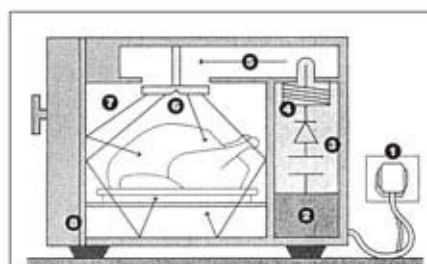
How Microwaves Cook Food

When the microwave is plugged into a socket, the door closed and oven switched on, microwaves are emitted from a magnetron (or microwave energy generator) usually on one side at the top, protected by a cover, generally plastic. The microwaves are transmitted into the inside of the oven cavity down a channel called a waveguide, bounce off the sides and 'beam' on to the food from all directions. Instantaneously, the food absorbs the microwaves, which cause the water molecules within the food to vibrate.



*Microwaves
deflecting
in an oven*

The result is excessively rapid friction that creates enough heat to cook food. For a simple demonstration of how friction makes heat, rub your hands together vigorously and feel how warm they become. Now imagine this multiplied umpteen times and you will understand how the microwaves work.



1. Flexible cord;
2. Power transformer;
3. High voltage rectifier and capacitor;
4. Magnetron;
5. Waveguide;
6. Wave stirrer (paddle);
7. Oven cavity;
8. Oven door and frame with special seals.

For even cooking, most models are fitted with a wave stirrer, stirrer blade or paddle (concealed at the top) which helps to distribute the waves. Most also have a rotating turntable so dishes do not need turning during cooking. However, turntables do restrict the shape and size of dishes, so consider buying a model where the turntable can be switched off or removed if necessary.

Successful Cooking

Because microwaves are short-length, high-frequency radio waves, they are able to penetrate only 2.5 cm/1 in of the food in all directions. Thus shallow containers are better than deep ones except those used for some cakes and puddings that need headroom for satisfactory rising. Round dishes give the best results, followed by oval. Sometimes food in rectangular or square dishes cooks unevenly, especially at the corners.

The food will also cook more effectively if thick pieces are arranged towards the outside edge of the dish and not piled up. Stirring during the cooking cycle helps to distribute heat and, where practical, this has been recommended in the recipes. If possible, whole potatoes and other similar-sized foods (apples for example) should be arranged, on a plate or in a dish, in a hollow triangle, square or circle. If your microwave is an older model without a turntable, make sure you turn the dishes several times during cooking.

Resting and Standing Times

For heat to penetrate the food and work its way gently from the outside to the centre, it is recommended that the food be allowed to rest and stand after or during cooking. Some dishes, especially large quantities, turkeys, etc., if cooked without a rest, would become overcooked on the outside but remain undercooked in the middle.

Depending on what is more convenient, food may be left to rest or stand inside or outside the microwave. Individual recipes give guidance on resting and standing. As a further precaution, it is preferable to return an undercooked dish briefly to the oven rather than add extra time initially. The microwaves act so swiftly that even a few too many seconds could spoil the food.

Seasonings

As salt toughens microwaved meat, poultry and vegetables, it should be added half-way through or at the end of cooking. Other seasonings, such as herbs and spices, may be added at the beginning.

Caution

Never operate the oven while empty because without food or liquid to absorb the microwaves they will bounce straight back to the magnetron and shorten its life span. Similarly, melting 5–10 ml/1–2 tsp of fat, or heating just a tiny amount of liquid, will have the same effect, so it is best to place a cup or tumbler of water in the oven at the same time. Just in case it gets switched on by accident, it is a wise safety measure always to keep a container of water inside an empty oven until it is needed for cooking.

Cleaning

Suggestions for cleaning have been given in Hints and Tips. As fresh food spills are so easy to remove from the cool interior of a microwave (nothing burns on in the conventional sense), a wipe over with

damp cloth immediately after use will ensure that it stays spotless and fresh.

Cookware

Metal containers reflect microwaves away from the food and prevent it cooking so metal containers or tins (pans) of any sort should never be used in the microwave. It is also important to note that crockery with metal trims or with the manufacturers' name or pattern design printed in gold or silver underneath could cause arcing – an effect like tiny flashes of lightning. This arcing not only damages the magnetron but also ruins the metallic decorations. The exceptions here are small amounts of foil used to cover poultry wing tips and ends of legs to prevent scorching, and metal kebab skewers that are well covered by the surrounding food.

However, you must ensure that the skewers do not come into direct contact with any part of the oven interior.

In order for the microwaves to reach the food and subsequently cook it, the dishes chosen should be made of materials through which the microwaves can pass most readily – like rays of sun through a window pane. These are listed below and, although most stay cool or even cold, some kinds absorb heat from the cooked food and feel hot to the touch. For comfort, the cookware should be removed from the oven using oven gloves.

Baskets

These may be used for brief reheating of rolls, etc. Prolonged spells in the microwave cause dryness and cracking.

Clingfilm

Clingfilm (plastic wrap) is excellent for covering and lining dishes. To prevent the film from ballooning up in the oven and bursting, or being sucked back on to the food (the latter is a disaster if it happens to a pudding that is supposed to rise), I have recommended puncturing the film twice with the tip of a knife to allow steam to escape. By puncturing, I mean making a small slit and not a tiny pin-prick.

Glass

Not your best crystal but Pyrex-type glassware is ideal. Corning ware, which is ceramic glass, is also excellent. Other, sturdy, glass may also be used.

Paper

Kitchen towel or paper napkins may be used to line the oven base if food is to be cooked directly on it (paper is a great absorber), and also to cover food to prevent spluttering.

Plastic

Use only rigid plastic; yoghurt or cottage cheese containers or thin plastic may collapse. Look for special microwave utensils made by firms like Lakeland or other reliable makes stocked by specialist kitchen shops, supermarkets and department stores. Note that plastic spatulas are useful as they can be left in, say, a sauce during cooking to use for stirring when required.

Pottery and Porcelain

Both may be used – but not your best china. Avoid dark utensils and ironstone as they absorb heat and take it away from the food.

Roasting Bags

Roasting bags, also called boiling bags, have a hundred and one uses; see-through plastic roasting bags are convenient to use and also clean. They are ideal for cooking joints of meat or poultry. Close the tops with elastic bands or string, not metal ties.

Waxed Paper Products

Like basketware, these dry out in the microwave and should be used only for brief reheating.

Wood

Like basketware, wood dries out in the microwave and should be used only for brief reheating.

Extras

Browning dish: this is a white ceramic dish, the base of which is coated with a special tin oxide material. It becomes very hot indeed when preheated, making it possible to sear food prior to microwave cooking. This gives the food the browned finish associated with conventional grilling (broiling) or frying (sautéing). As the dish needs to be preheated, empty, for varying lengths of time depending on the food being cooked, be guided by your own microwave oven instruction book.

As a general rule, the preheating time should be around 6 minutes for steaks and chops and 2–3 minutes for eggs. It should never be preheated for longer than 8 minutes, nor used in a conventional oven. If you are cooking in batches, the browning dish will need cleaning and preheating for half the initial length of time between batches. Although it will take on a yellowy tinge when hot, the dish will return to its original colour when cool. Preheating this type of dish does not harm the oven.

Temperature probe: this looks like a thick knitting needle attached to a plastic-coated lead and is generally available with the more sophisticated models of microwave ovens to register the internal temperature of food. One end slots into the side of the oven while the sharp end is inserted into the food to be cooked.

The cooking cycle is therefore geared to temperature and not time and when, for example, a joint well-done beef registers 160°C, the oven will switch off automatically. As every model varies, please refer to your own microwave book before using the probe and setting the temperature.

Thermometer: thermometers for use in microwave ovens are now obtainable and, like temperature probes, they must be used according to the manufacturers' instructions. Never use a conventional meat thermometer in a microwave, although it can be used to test the meat for doneness when the joint is resting after cooking.

Choice of Microwave Ovens

People often ask me which model I would recommend and I always find this a difficult question to answer. Those who are not technically minded will do best with a fairly basic model that is straightforward to operate and does its job efficiently. Others might find the new models a joy in that they bear some relation to computers and can be easily programmed and manipulated to suit all purposes.

The only advice I can give on the selection front is to suggest a visit to your electricity supply retail store or a department store to have a thorough look at as many ovens as you can and ask for a demonstration. You will then be in a good position to buy what suits you, not what looks fabulous, is very expensive and turns out to be more to cope with than you bargained for.

Power Controls

Most domestic microwave ovens vary between 500 and 850 watt output.

All recipes in this book have been prepared in a 650 watt output oven, and usually use only two power settings: Full, which is 100 per cent power (650 watts), and Defrost, which is 50 per cent (325 watts). If your oven has a different output, the guide below may prove useful. Be warned: if you have a higher wattage output oven, make sure you do reduce cooking times and check a little before the end of your calculated cooking time. You can always cook for a few seconds more.

- For a 500/550 watt output oven, increase the cooking time by about 20 per cent, e.g. 10 minutes becomes 12 minutes.
- A 600 watt output oven will be much the same as a 650 watt one.
- For a 700 watt output oven, decrease the cooking time by about 20 per cent, e.g. 10 minutes becomes 8 minutes.
- For a 850 watt output oven, decrease the cooking time by about 30 per cent, e.g. 10 minutes becomes 7 minutes.

Using these figures will give a fairly accurate conversion time but for greater accuracy refer to your own microwave oven recipe book. Note that some manufacturers call Defrost 30 per cent power. Check your manual if yours does and you have a 650 watt or less output microwave, in which case use Medium (50 per cent) power where a recipe calls for Defrost. If you have a higher output (650–850 watts), use 30 per cent power instead of Defrost.

There are now technically advanced microwave ovens with variable power settings ranging from 1–10 or from 1–5 (see figures in brackets in the Summary of Settings). The variable settings enable some dishes to be cooked more slowly than others and some users find this advantageous, especially when making stews and casseroles. Some models have a system whereby the power comes on and off automatically; listen and you can hear it happening. Other models have an automatic reduction in output at the lower settings but this is silent.

Colour

Foods cooked in the microwave can look pale and insipid. Hence my inclusion of bastes for roast meats and poultry, a few shakes of soy sauce or a dusting of paprika, beef stock cubes for stews and casseroles, and icings (frostings) for cakes. I have also incorporated a number of other tricks – like using Red Leicester cheese for toppings instead of Cheddar. As you will find out when you make up the recipes in the book, none lacks colour.

Summary of Settings

- **Setting 1 (1)** equates to 10 per cent of power output and is used to keep cooked dishes warm or to take the chill off cold ones. It is called either warm or low.
- **Setting 2** equates to 20 per cent of power output and is recommended for warming or very gentle simmering. It is called either warm or low.
- **Setting 3 (2)** equates to 30 per cent of power output and is used for defrosting and

simmering. It is called either defrost, medium-low, simmer or soften.

- **Setting 4** equates to 40 per cent of power output and is often chosen for defrosting, braising and stewing. It is called either slow cook, medium, low defrost, stew, simmer or braise.
- **Setting 5 (3)** equates to 50 per cent of power output and is used for defrosting and also for simmering and stewing. It is called either medium, defrost, simmer or stew.
- **Setting 6** equates to 60 per cent of power output and is used chiefly for reheating cooked dishes, baking or simmering. This setting is called either reheat, bake or simmer.
- **Setting 7 (4)** equates to 70 per cent of power output and is used primarily for roasting. It is called either medium-high, bake or roast.
- **Setting 8** equates to 80 per cent of power output and is also used for reheating and baking. It is called either reheat or bake.
- **Setting 9** equates to 90 per cent of power output and is used for fast cooking of vegetables in fat (i.e. when making a stew). It is called either medium-high, roast or fast reheat, or sometimes sauté.
- **Setting 10 (5)** equates to 100 per cent of power output and is used for the majority of recipes in this book. It is called either full, high maximum or fast cook.

Even if you have a microwave with variable power settings such as listed above, do not try to convert my recipes, which were all cooked at Full or 50 per cent power.

Reheating

Conventional reheating of meat and poultry, or keeping plates of food warm in a cool oven, can sometimes cause a build-up of bacteria, resulting in mild food poisoning. With a microwave oven, the action is so fast that germs have no time to breed, and the food stays fresh and moist without looking frayed round the edges.

Bonuses

Freshness of flavour and colour, plus retention of nutrients, characterise most foods cooked in a microwave oven. The foods also tend to shrink less, and cooking smells are reduced. It is encouraging to know that when cooking in the microwave the electricity saved is between 50 and 70 per cent. Also no preheating is necessary and there is minimal residual heat in the oven cavity. It has been estimated that using a microwave is four times as efficient as conventional cooking because all the energy is directed to the food, with no 'overspill'.

Notes on the Recipes

- Always check food is piping hot all the way through before serving.
- When following a recipe, use either metric, imperial or American measures, never a combination.

- All spoon measures are level: 1 tsp = 5 ml; 1 tbsp = 15 ml.
- Always wash and peel, if necessary, fresh produce before preparation.
- Adjust strong-flavoured ingredients and seasonings to taste.
- Herbs are fresh unless otherwise stated. You can substitute dried for fresh, as long as the herb is not for garnishing, but halve the quantity stated in the recipe as they are more pungent.
- Eggs are medium unless otherwise stated.
- Never preheat a microwave.
- Dishes used for cooking sandwich-type cakes, deep cakes, flans, quiches and tarts should be the same depth as traditional baking tins (pans).

Starters

This world-wide selection of easy-to-prepare starters and nibbles covers old favourites like quiches, pâtés, Egg Mayonnaise, Potted Shrimps and the typically English Scotch Woodcock, still served in City of London gentlemen's clubs. All of them make the most of the microwave. For anyone into more exotic taste sensations, the microwave makes light work of bean salads, aubergine (egg plant) and avocado combinations, Pickled Mushrooms and hearty and substantial snacks from Germany and Holland. The warm and trendy Leafy Salad with Goat's Cheese and Warm Dressing also takes a bow, as do Stuffed Tomatoes, a buttery Rich Liver Pâté and Devilled Nuts to munch with drinks.

Minted Aubergine Dip

Serves 6–8

*750 g/1½ lb aubergines (eggplants)
Juice of 1 lemon
20 ml/4 tsp olive oil
1–2 garlic cloves, crushed
250 ml/8 fl oz/1 cup fromage frais or quark
15 ml/1 tbsp chopped mint leaves
1.5 ml/¼ tsp caster (superfine) sugar
7.5–10 ml/1½–2 tsp salt*

Top and tail the aubergines and halve them lengthways. Arrange them on a large plate, cut sides down and cover with kitchen paper. Cook on Full for 8–9 minutes or until soft. Scoop the flesh out of the skins directly into a food processor and add the remaining ingredients. Process to a smooth and creamy purée. Spoon into a serving bowl, cover and chill lightly before serving.

Aubergine Dip with Tomatoes and Mixed Herbs

Serves 6–8

*750 g/1½ lb aubergines (eggplants)
5 ml/1 tsp chopped mint leaves
75 ml/3 tsp chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves
5 ml/1 tsp chopped parsley
3 tomatoes, blanched, skinned, seeded and finely chopped*

Top and tail the aubergines and halve them lengthways. Arrange them on a large plate, cut sides down and cover with kitchen paper. Cook on Full for 8–9 minutes or until soft. Scoop the flesh out of the skins directly into a food processor and add the remaining ingredients except the tomatoes. Process to a smooth and creamy purée. Stir in the tomatoes, then spoon into a serving bowl, cover and chill lightly before serving.

Middle Eastern Aubergine and Tahini Dip

Serves 6–8

750 g/1½ lb aubergines (eggplants)
45 ml/3 tbsp tahini (sesame seed paste)

Juice of 1 small lemon
1 garlic clove, thinly sliced
25 ml/1½ tbsp olive oil
1 small onion, sliced
60 ml/4 tbsp coarsely chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves
5 ml/1 tsp caster (superfine) sugar
5–10 ml/1–2 tsp salt

Top and tail the aubergines and halve them lengthways. Arrange them on a large plate, cut sides down and cover with kitchen paper. Cook on Full for 8–9 minutes or until soft. Scoop the flesh out of the skins directly into a food processor. Add the remaining ingredients and salt to taste. Process to a smooth and creamy purée. Spoon into a serving bowl and serve at room temperature.

Turkish Aubergine Dip

Serves 6–8

750 g/1½ lb aubergines (eggplants)
30 ml/2 tbsp olive oil
Juice of 1 large lemon
2.5–5 ml/½–1 tsp salt
2.5 ml/½ tsp caster (superfine) sugar

Black olives, red (bell) pepper strips and tomato wedges, to garnish

Top and tail the aubergines and halve them lengthways. Arrange them on a large plate, cut sides down and cover with kitchen paper. Cook on Full for 8–9 minutes or until soft. Scoop the flesh out of the skins directly into a food processor and add the remaining ingredients. Process to a semi-smooth purée. Pile into a serving dish and garnish with olives, red pepper and tomato wedges.

Greek Aubergine Dip

Serves 6–8

750 g/1½ lb aubergines (eggplants)
1 small onion, coarsely grated
2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
5 ml/1 tsp malt vinegar
5 ml/1 tsp lemon juice
150 ml/¼ pt/2/3 cup mild olive oil

2 large tomatoes, blanched, seeded and coarsely chopped

Parsley, green or red (bell) pepper rings and small black olives, to garnish

Top and tail the aubergines and halve them lengthways. Arrange them on a large plate, cut sides down and cover with kitchen paper. Cook on Full for 8–9 minutes or until soft. Scoop the flesh out of the skins directly into a food processor and add the onion, garlic, vinegar, lemon juice and oil. Process to a smooth purée. Spoon into a large bowl and mix in the tomatoes. Pile into a serving dish and garnish with parsley, pepper rings and olives.

Bagna Cauda

Serves 4–6

An immensely rich and unique anchovy dip from Italy which, once made, should be kept warm over a lit spirit stove on the dining table. The dunks are generally raw or cooked vegetables. Use only mild and delicate pale gold extra virgin olive oil, otherwise the flavour may be too strong.

*30 ml/2 tbsp olive oil
25 g/1 oz/2 tbsp unsalted (sweet) butter
1 garlic clove, crushed
50 g/2 oz/1 small can anchovy fillets in oil
60 ml/4 tbsp finely chopped parsley
15 ml/1 tbsp finely chopped basil leaves*

Put the oil, butter and garlic into a non-metallic flameproof bowl. Add the oil from the can of anchovies, the parsley and basil. Finely chop the anchovies and add to the bowl. Part-cover the bowl with a plate and cook on Defrost for 3–4 minutes until the dip is just warmed. Transfer to a lit spirit stove and keep warm while eating.

Bagna Cauda with Cream

Serves 6

Prepare as for Bagna Cauda, but add 150 ml/¼ pt/2/3 cup crème fraîche to the butter mixture with the anchovies. Cook for an extra 1½ minutes.

Aubergine Casserole

Serves 4

A Louisiana recipe, which returned with me from this steamy part of North America.

*2 aubergines (eggplants), about 550 g/1¼ lb in all
1 celery stalk, finely chopped
1 large onion, finely chopped
½ green (bell) pepper, seeded and finely chopped
30 ml/2 tbsp sunflower or corn oil
3 tomatoes, skinned and chopped
75 g/3 oz/1½ cups fresh white breadcrumbs
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
50 g/2 oz/½ cup Cheddar cheese, grated*

Using a sharp knife, score the skin of each aubergine lengthways all the way round. Place on a plate, cover with kitchen paper and cook on Full for 6 minutes, turning once. They should feel tender but, if not, cook for a further 1–2 minutes. Halve each along the scoring, then scoop the pulp into blender or food processor and discard the skins. Process to a purée. Put the celery, onion, green pepper and oil into a 2 litre/3½ pt/8½ cup casserole dish (Dutch oven), cover with a plate and cook on Full for 3 minutes. Mix in the aubergine purée, tomatoes, breadcrumbs and salt and pepper to taste and cook on Full for a further 3 minutes. Uncover, sprinkle with the cheese and reheat, uncovered, on Full for 2 minutes. Allow to stand for 2 minutes before serving.

Pickled Cocktail Mushrooms

Serves 8

60 ml/4 tbsp red wine vinegar
60 ml/4 tbsp sunflower or corn oil
1 onion, very thinly sliced
5 ml/1 tsp salt
15 ml/1 tbsp chopped coriander (cilantro) leaves
5 ml/1 tsp mild made mustard
15 ml/1 tbsp light soft brown sugar
5 ml/1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
Cayenne pepper
350 g/12 oz button mushrooms

Put the vinegar, oil, onion, salt, coriander, mustard, sugar and Worcestershire sauce into a 2 litre/ 3½ pt/8½ cup casserole dish (Dutch oven) with a sprinkling of cayenne pepper. Cover with a plate and heat on Full for 6 minutes. Stir in the mushrooms. When cold, cover and chill for about 12 hours. Drain and serve with a creamy dip.

Stuffed Baked Aubergines with Eggs and Pine Nuts

Serves 2

2 aubergines (eggplants), about 550 g/1¼ lb in all
10 ml/2 tsp lemon juice
75 g/3 oz/1½ cups fresh white or brown breadcrumbs
45 ml/3 tbsp toasted pine nuts
7.5 ml/1½ tsp salt
1 garlic clove, crushed
3 hard-boiled (hard-cooked) eggs, chopped
60 ml/4 tbsp milk
5 ml/1 tsp dried mixed herbs
20 ml/4 tsp olive oil

Using a sharp knife, score the skin of each aubergine lengthways all the way round. Place on a plate, cover with kitchen paper and cook on Full for 6 minutes, turning once. They should feel tender but, if not, cook for a further 1–2 minutes. Halve each along the scoring, then scoop the pulp into a blender food processor, leaving the skins intact. Add the lemon juice and process to a smooth purée. Scrape into a bowl and mix in all the remaining ingredients except the oil. Spoon into the aubergine skins, then arrange on a plate with the narrow ends towards the centre. Trickle the oil over the top, cover with kitchen paper and reheat on Full for 4 minutes. Eat hot or cold.

Greek Mushrooms

Serves 4

1 bouquet garni sachet
1 garlic clove, crushed

2 bay leaves
60 ml/4 tbsp water
30 ml/2 tbsp lemon juice
15 ml/1 tbsp wine vinegar
15 ml/1 tbsp olive oil
5 ml/1 tsp salt
450 g/1 lb button mushrooms
30 ml/2 tbsp chopped parsley

Put all the ingredients except the mushrooms and parsley into a large bowl. Cover with a plate and heat on Full for 4 minutes. Stir in the mushrooms, cover as before and cook on Full for a further 3½ minutes. Cool, cover, then chill for several hours. Remove the bouquet garni then, using a draining spoon, lift the mushrooms on to four plates, sprinkle each with the parsley and serve.

Artichokes Vinaigrette

Serves 4

450g/1lb Jerusalem artichokes
Vinaigrette dressing, home-made or bought
10 ml/2 tsp chopped parsley
5 ml/1 tsp chopped tarragon

Put the artichokes and a little water into a dish and cover with a plate. Cook on Full for 10 minutes, turning the dish twice. Drain thoroughly and slice thickly. Coat with the vinaigrette dressing while still warm. Divide between four plates and sprinkle with the parsley and tarragon.

Caesar Salad

Serves 4

A unique salad, created in the twenties by Caesar Cardini, which unusually features coddled eggs. It is a superbly simple starter yet has classic chic.

1 cos (romaine) lettuce, chilled
1 garlic clove, crushed
60 ml/4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 large eggs
5 ml/1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
Juice of 2 lemons, strained
90 ml/6 tbsp freshly grated Parmesan cheese
50 g/2 oz/1 cup garlic croûtons

Cut the lettuce across into 5 cm/2 in pieces and place in a salad bowl with the garlic, oil and seasoning to taste. Toss gently. To coddle the eggs, line a cereal bowl with clingfilm (plastic wrap) and break in the eggs. Cook, uncovered, on Defrost for 1½ minutes. Add to the salad bowl with all the remaining ingredients and toss again until thoroughly mixed. Arrange on dinner plates and serve straight away.

Dutch Chicory with Egg and Butter

Serves 4

8 heads chicory (Belgian endive)
30 ml/2 tbsp lemon juice
75 ml/5 tbsp boiling water
5 ml/1 tsp salt
75 g/3 oz/1/3 cup butter, at kitchen temperature and quite soft
4 hard-boiled (hard-cooked) eggs , chopped

Trim the chicory and cut out a cone-shaped piece from the base of each to prevent a bitter taste. Arrange the chicory in a single layer in a 20 cm/8 in diameter dish and add the lemon juice and water. Sprinkle with the salt. Cover with clingfilm (plastic wrap) and slit it twice to allow the steam to escape. Cook on Full for 15 minutes. Allow to stand 3 minutes, then drain. While the chicory is cooking, beat the butter until light and creamy. Mix in the eggs. Arrange the chicory on four warmed plates and top with the egg mixture. Eat straight away.

Egg Mayonnaise

Serves 1

One of France's standard starters, Egg Mayonnaise is reliably appetising and can be varied according to taste.

Shredded lettuce leaves
1–2 hard-boiled (hard-cooked) eggs, halved
Mayonnaise Sauce, or use bought mayonnaise
4 canned anchovy fillets in oil
1 tomato, cut into wedges

Arrange the lettuce on a plate. Top with the eggs, cut sides down. Coat fairly thickly with the mayonnaise, then garnish to taste with the anchovies and tomato wedges.

Eggs with Skordalia Mayonnaise

Serves 4

A simplified version of a complex garlic and breadcrumb mayonnaise sauce that complements the flavour and texture of the eggs.

150 ml/¼ pt/2/3 cup Mayonnaise Sauce
1 garlic clove, crushed
10 ml/2 tsp fresh white breadcrumbs
15 ml/1 tbsp ground almonds
10 ml/2 tsp lemon juice
10 ml/2 tsp chopped parsley
Shredded lettuce leaves
2 or 4 hard-boiled (hard-cooked) eggs, halved
1 red onion, very thinly sliced
Small Greek black olives, to garnish

Mix together the mayonnaise, garlic, breadcrumbs, almonds, lemon juice and parsley. Arrange the

lettuce on a plate, then top with the egg halves. Coat with the mayonnaise mixture, then garnish with the onion slices and olives.

Scotch Woodcock

Serves 4

This belongs to the old league of City gentlemen's clubs and, served hot, remains one of the most upmarket of canapés.

4 slices bread

Butter

Gentleman's Relish or anchovy paste

2 quantities Extra Creamy Scrambled Eggs

A few canned anchovy fillets in oil, to garnish

Toast the bread, then spread with butter. Spread thinly with Gentleman's Relish or anchovy paste, cut each slice into quarters and keep warm. Make the Extra Creamy Scrambled Eggs and spoon on to the toast quarters. Garnish with anchovy fillets.

Eggs with Swedish Mayonnaise

Serves 4

Shredded lettuce leaves

1–2 hard-boiled (hard-cooked) eggs, halved

25 ml/1½ tbsp apple purée (apple sauce)

Caster (superfine) sugar

150 ml/¼ pt/2/3 cup Mayonnaise Sauce, or use bought mayonnaise

5 ml/1 tsp horseradish sauce

5–10 ml/1–2 tsp black or orange mock caviare

1 red-skinned eating (dessert) apple, thinly sliced

Arrange the lettuce on a plate. Top with the eggs, cut sides down. Sweeten the apple purée lightly with caster sugar, then mix into the mayonnaise with the horseradish sauce. Coat the eggs with this mixture, then garnish with the mock caviare and a band of apple slices.

Turkish Bean Salad

Serves 6

This is called fesulya plaki in Turkey, and is essentially a mix of canned haricot (navy) beans and a helping of Mediterranean vegetables. It's an economical starter and begs for crusty bread on the side.

75 ml/5 tbsp olive oil

2 onions, finely grated

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 large ripe tomato, blanched, skinned, seeded and chopped

1 green (bell) pepper, seeded and very finely chopped

10 ml/2 tsp caster (superfine) sugar

75 ml/5 tbsp water

2.5–5 ml/½–1 tsp salt

30 ml/2 tbsp chopped dill (dill weed)
400 g/14 oz/1 large can haricot beans, drained

Put the oil, onions and garlic into a 1.75 litre/3 pt/7½ cup dish and cook, uncovered, on Full for 5 minutes, stirring twice. Mix in the tomato, green pepper, sugar, water and salt. Two-thirds cover with a plate and cook on Full for 7 minutes, stirring twice. Allow to cool completely, then cover and chill for several hours. Stir in the dill and beans. Cover again and chill for a further hour.

Bean Salad with Egg

Serves 6

Prepare as for Turkish Bean Salad but garnish each portion with wedges of hard-boiled (hard-cooked) egg.

Potted Kipper

Serves 6

275 g/10 oz kipper fillets
75 g/3 oz/1/3 cup cream cheese
Juice of ½ lemon
2.5 ml/½ tsp English or continental made mustard
1 garlic clove, thinly sliced (optional)
Hot toast or savoury biscuits (crackers), to serve

Microwave the kippers. Remove the skin and bones and flake up the flesh. Transfer to a food processor with the remaining ingredients and process until the mixture forms a paste. Spoon into a small dish and level the top. Cover and chill until firm. Serve spread on to hot toast or savoury biscuits.

Slimmers' Potted Kipper

Serves 6

Prepare as for Potted Kipper, but substitute fromage frais for the cream cheese.

Buttery Potted Kipper

Serves 6

Prepare as for Potted Kipper, but substitute unsalted (sweet) butter for the cream cheese.

Potted Shrimp

Serves 4

Another typically British revivalist recipe. Serve with freshly made thin white toast.

175 g/6 oz/¾ cup unsalted (sweet) butter
225 g/8 oz/2 cups tiny shrimps
A pinch of allspice
White pepper
Toast, to serve

Put the butter into bowl and cover with a plate. Microwave on Full for about 2–3 minutes until melted. Combine two-thirds of the butter with the shrimps, then season with the allspice and pepper to taste. Spoon into four individual pots or ramekin dishes (custard cups). Coat evenly with the rest of the butter. Chill until the butter is set. Turn out on to plates and eat with toast.

Potted Smoked Salmon

Serves 4

Prepare as for Potted Shrimp, but substitute coarsely chopped smoked salmon for the shrimps.

Potted Smoked Mackerel

Serves 4

Prepare as for Potted Shrimp, but substitute flaked smoked mackerel for the shrimps.

Baked Stuffed Egg Avocados

Serves 4

A neglected recipe from the seventies, often chosen then for a light meal or substantial starter.

*2 celery stalks, finely chopped
60 ml/4 tbsp fresh white breadcrumbs
2.5 ml/½ tsp finely grated lemon peel
5 ml/1 tsp onion salt
2.5 ml/½ tsp paprika
45 ml/3 tbsp single (light) cream
Freshly ground black pepper
2 medium–large just-ripe avocados
2 large hard-boiled (hard-cooked) eggs, chopped
20 ml/4 tsp toasted breadcrumbs
20 ml/4 tsp melted butter*

Combine the celery, white breadcrumbs, lemon peel, onion salt, paprika and cream and add pepper to taste. Halve the avocados and remove the stones (pits). Scoop out some of the flesh to make room for the filling and mash coarsely. Add the flesh to the crumb mixture with the eggs. Mix well and pile in the avocado shells. Arrange on a plate with the pointed ends towards the centre. Sprinkle with the toasted breadcrumbs, then trickle the butter over the top. Cover with kitchen paper and warm on Full for 4–5 minutes. Eat straight away.

Baked Stuffed Avocados with Prawns

Serves 4

Prepare as for Baked Stuffed Egg Avocados, but substitute 175 g/6 oz/ 1½ cups peeled prawns (shrimp), coarsely chopped, for the eggs.

Baked Stuffed Avocados with Parma Ham and Walnuts

Serves 4

Prepare as for Baked Stuffed Egg Avocados, but substitute 100 g/ 3½ oz/1 cup coarsely chopped

Parma ham and 30 ml/2 tbsps finely chopped walnuts for the eggs.

Tomato and Cheese-stuffed Avocados

Serves 2 as a main meal, 4 as a starter

A glorious mix, perfect for vegetarians and anyone else thinking along those lines.

*2 large ripe avocados
Juice of ½ lime
50 g/2 oz/1 cup soft brown breadcrumbs
1 small onion, finely grated
2 tomatoes, blanched, skinned and chopped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
50 g/2 oz/½ cup hard cheese, grated
Paprika
8 toasted hazelnuts*

Halve the avocados and carefully scoop out the flesh directly into a bowl. Add the lime juice and mash finely with a fork. Stir in the breadcrumbs, onion and tomatoes with salt and pepper to taste. Place in the avocado shells and sprinkle with the cheese and paprika. Top each half with two hazelnuts. Arrange on a large plate with the pointed ends towards the centre. Cover loosely with kitchen paper and cook on Full for 5–5½ minutes. Serve straight away.

Sturdy Max

Serves 1

A recipe from old Berlin

Butter a large slice of German rye bread and top with a slice of German air-dried ham (schinken). Top with two fried eggs, sprinkle with chopped parsley or chives and serve straight away.

Scandinavian Rollmop and Apple Salad

Serves 4

*75 g/3 oz dried apple rings
150 ml/¼ pt/2/3 cup water
3 rollmops with onions
150 ml/¼ pt/2/3 cup whipping or double (heavy) cream
Crispbread, to serve*

Wash the apple rings, snap into chunks, put into a medium-sized bowl and add the water. Cover with a plate and heat on Full for 5 minutes. Allow to stand for 5 minutes, then drain thoroughly. Undo the rollmops and cut them into diagonal strips. Add to the apple with the onions and mix in the cream. Cover and marinate overnight in the refrigerator. Stir before serving, then arrange on individual plates and serve with crispbread.

Rollmop and Apple Salad with Curry Sauce

Serves 4

Prepare as for Scandinavian Rollmop and Apple Salad, but substitute half mayonnaise and half crème fraîche for the cream. Flavour with curry paste to taste.

Leafy Salad with Goat's Cheese and Warm Dressing

Serves 4

*12 small round lettuce leaves
1 box cress
20 rocket leaves
4 individual goat's cheeses
90 ml/6 tbsp grapeseed oil
30 ml/2 tbsp hazelnut oil
10 ml/2 tsp orange flower water
10 ml/2 tsp Dijon mustard
45 ml/3 tbsp rice or cider vinegar
10 ml/2 tsp caster (superfine) sugar
5 ml/1 tsp salt*

Wash and dry the lettuce leaves. Trim, wash and dry the cress. Wash and drain the rocket. Arrange these three attractively on four individual plates and place a cheese in the centre of each. Place all the remaining ingredients in a bowl and heat, uncovered, on Defrost for 3 minutes. Stir to mix, then spoon over each salad.

Dutch Egg Snack

Serves 1

A filling starter, unpronounceable by its Dutch name – uitsmijter.

Butter a large slice of white or brown bread and top with a thick slice of ham or thinly sliced rare roast beef. Top with two freshly fried eggs and garnish with tomato wedges, baby gherkins (cornichons) and any salad leaves.

Jellied Tomato Sundaes

Serves 4

*4 tomatoes, blanched, skinned and chopped
5 ml/1 tsp finely chopped fresh root ginger
5 ml/1 tsp finely grated lime peel
20 ml/4 tsp powdered gelatine
750 ml/1¼ pt/3 cups chicken stock
30 ml/2 tbsp tomato purée (paste)
5 ml/1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
5 ml/1 tsp caster (superfine) sugar
5 ml/1 tsp celery salt
20 ml/4 tsp crème fraîche
Toasted sesame seeds, for sprinkling
Cheese biscuits (crackers), to serve*

Divide the tomatoes equally between four large wine glasses, then sprinkle with the ginger and lime peel. Put the gelatine into a 1.5 litre/ 2½ pt/6 cup bowl with 75 ml/5 tbsp stock and leave to soften for 5 minutes. Melt, uncovered, on Defrost for about 2 minutes. Stir in the remaining stock with the tomato purée, Worcestershire sauce, sugar and celery salt. Whisk gently until evenly combined, then chill only until just beginning to thicken slightly. Spoon over the tomatoes, then chill to set. Top each with 5 ml/1 tsp crème fraîche and a sprinkling of sesame seeds before serving with cheese biscuits.

Stuffed Tomatoes

Serves 4

A sound but uncomplicated starter, delicious served on rounds of buttered toast or rounds of bread fried (sautéed) in garlic butter.

6 tomatoes
1 onion, grated
50 g/2 oz/1 cup fresh white breadcrumbs
5 ml/1 tsp made mustard
5 ml/1 tsp salt
15 ml/1 tbsp chopped chives or parsley
50 g/2 oz/½ cup chopped cold cooked meat or poultry, chopped prawns (shrimp) or grated cheese
1 small egg, beaten

Halve the tomatoes and scoop the centres into a bowl, discarding the hard cores. Stand the shells upside-down on kitchen paper to drain. Put all the remaining ingredients into a bowl and add the tomato pulp. Stir well with a fork to mix, then spoon back into the tomato halves. Arrange in two rings, one inside the other, round the edge of a dinner plate. Cover with kitchen paper and cook on Fu for 7 minutes, turning the plate three times. Serve hot, allowing three halves per portion.

Italian Stuffed Tomatoes

Serves 4

6 tomatoes
75 g/3 oz/1½ cups fresh brown breadcrumbs
175 g/6 oz/1½ cups Mozzarella cheese, grated
2.5 ml/½ tsp dried oregano
2.5 ml/½ tsp salt
10 ml/2 tsp chopped basil leaves
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 small egg, beaten

Halve the tomatoes and scoop the centres into a bowl, discarding the hard cores. Stand the shells upside-down on kitchen paper to drain. Put all the remaining ingredients into a bowl and add the tomato pulp. Stir well with a fork to mix, then spoon back into the tomato halves. Arrange in two rings, one inside the other, round the edge of a dinner plate. Cover with kitchen paper and cook on Fu for 7–8 minutes, turning the plate three times. Serve hot or cold, allowing three halves per portion.

French Stuffed Tomatoes

Serves 4

Prepare as for Italian Stuffed Tomatoes, but substitute blue Roquefort cheese for the Mozzarella and ml/1 tsp dried herbes de Provence for the oregano and basil.

Tomato and Chicken Salad Cups

Serves 4

*450 ml/¾ pt/2 cups chicken stock
15 ml/1 tbsp powdered gelatine
30 ml/2 tbsp tomato purée (paste)
1 small onion, finely grated
5 ml/1 tsp caster (superfine) sugar
1 small green (bell) pepper, cut into tiny cubes
175 g/6 oz/1½ cups cold cooked meat, finely chopped
1 carrot, grated
2 canned pineapple rings (not fresh or the jelly won't set)
2 hard-boiled (hard-cooked) eggs, grated*

Pour half the stock into a 1.5 litre/ 2½ pt/6 cup bowl. Stir in the gelatine and leave to soften for 5 minutes. Melt, uncovered, on Defrost for 2–2½ minutes. Add the remaining stock, stirring well to mix. Cover and chill until cold and just beginning to thicken, then fold in all the remaining ingredients except the eggs. Divide between four glass bowls and chill until set. Before serving, sprinkle with the egg.

Vegetarian Tomato Salad Cups

Serves 4

Prepare as for Tomato and Chicken Salad Cups, but substitute 175 g/ 6 oz/¾ cup cottage cheese for the chicken and use vegetable stock.

Chopped Egg and Onion

Serves 4 as a starter, 6 as an appetiser

A spectacular all-year-round Jewish classic, best eaten with crisp biscuits such as traditional matzo. The big advantage is microwaving the eggs – no steamed-up kitchen and no saucepan to wash up. Butter or any margarine is suggested here, but the orthodox community would use only vegetable margarine.

*5 hard-boiled (hard-cooked) eggs, shelled and finely chopped
40 g/1½ oz/3 tbsp butter or margarine, softened
1 onion, finely grated
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Salad leaves or parsley, to garnish*

Combine the chopped eggs with the butter or margarine. Stir in the onion and season to taste. Pile on to four plates and garnish each with salad leaves or parsley.

Chopped Egg with Parsley

Serves 4 as a starter, 6 as an appetiser

Prepare as for Chopped Egg and Onion, but add 60 ml/4 tbsp chopped parsley to the egg mixture.

Quiche Lorraine

Serves 4–6

The original French quiche or savoury flan, with a ‘family’ of variations.

For the pastry (paste):

175 g/6 oz/1½ cups plain (all-purpose) flour

1.5 ml/¼ tsp salt

100 g/3½ oz/scant ½ cup butter mixed with margarine, white cooking fat or lard, or use all margarine

1 small egg yolk

For the filling:

6 rashers (slices) streaky bacon

3 eggs

300 ml/½ pt/1¼ cups full-cream milk or single (light) cream

2.5 ml/½ level tsp salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Grated nutmeg

To make the pastry, sift the flour and salt into a bowl. Rub in the fat until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs, then mix to a firm dough with cold water. Wrap in foil and chill for ½–¾ hour. Turn out on to a floured surface and knead quickly and lightly until smooth. Roll out into a thin circle and use to line a 20 cm/8 in diameter glass, china or pottery flan dish. Pinch the top edge into tiny flutes, then prick all over with fork. Cook uncovered on Full for 6 minutes, turning the dish twice. If the pastry has bulged in places, press down gently with a hand protected by an oven glove. Brush all over with the egg yolk and cook on Full for 1 minute to seal any holes. Leave to stand while preparing the filling.

Arrange the bacon rashers on a plate lined with kitchen paper, cover with another sheet of kitchen paper and cook on Full for 5 minutes, turning once. Drain and allow to cool slightly. Cut each rasher into three pieces and place over the base of the pastry case. Beat the eggs with the milk or cream and season with the salt and pepper to taste. Strain carefully into the flan over the bacon and sprinkle with nutmeg. Cook uncovered on Full, turning the dish four times, for 10–12 minutes or until bubbles just begin to break across the centre. Allow to stand for 10 minutes before cutting. Eat warm or cold.

Cheese and Bacon Quiche

Serves 4–6

Prepare as for Quiche Lorraine, but use four bacon rashers (slices) instead of six to cover the base of the flan. After straining in the egg and milk mixture, sprinkle the top with 50 g/2 oz/½ cup grated hard cheese in addition to the nutmeg.

Cheese and Mushroom Quiche

Serves 4–6

Prepare as for Quiche Lorraine, but substitute 50 g/2 oz sliced mushrooms for the bacon. Season the egg and milk mixture with 5 ml/1 tsp made mustard before straining it into the flan. Sprinkle the top with 50 g/2 oz/½ cup grated hard cheese in addition to the nutmeg.

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