



Microwave in every kitchen

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Just about every kitchen, home and commercial, has a microwave oven and has for several decades now. There

are still questions that come up about their use and safety. Indeed, go to the internet and you will find ample warnings about the horrors of using microwaves to cook our food.

For example, one website links in the Nazis in World War II for having created a ‘microwave-like’ tool for cooking. Further, it adds that “The Soviets issued an international warning on the health hazards, both biological and environmental of microwave ovens....”

Should we worry? We don’t think so —After all, it is the Internet where every idea can claim its supporters.

First, how do microwave ovens work? Electromagnetic waves called microwaves (very short frequency) affect water molecules in foods, causing them to move about. The friction in turn generates heat. That’s pretty much it.

One of the oft-cited concerns is for “leaking microwaves” and the dangers therein. The answer to this is simple. Microwave ovens are built to standards that allow only miniscule escape of their electromagnetic energy. As long as the door and hinges seal properly, there is nothing to worry about. Indeed, if any microwaves do escape, moving away just a few inches is enough to avoid them.

If there is a concern, it is for people with older pacemakers. These may be affected (when very close to) the electromagnetic waves. However, unless located very

close to a source, this should not be an issue. Moreover, pacemakers are made with shields to protect against these waves.

Another concern that is promoted is that microwaves create harmful compounds in foods. This is not true. (Just remember what is happening when microwaves hit food: water molecules get excited. Period.)

Other concerns include whether nutrients are destroyed as a result of microwaving. Any cooking (heating) will destroy some nutrients, but because this method is so fast and uses so little water (think of boiling your veggies in comparison) that few nutrients are lost.

The rule of thumb for the dishware or containers to be used in these oven is that it should be labelled microwave-safe, the best of which are glass or ceramic. Plastics with the label are perfectly fine as well. What is not a good choice is any metal dish or one with metal trim (think of your mom’s really good china with the

gold or platinum edging). If you are not sure if a dish is good for the microwave, put it into the oven (empty) along with a glass con-

tainer holding about a cup of water. Run the oven on high for one minute. If the empty dish is heats up, it is not suitable.

Despite all the self-serving and irrational concerns that may exist “out there,” microwaving is a most simple, efficient and effective way to heat up and cook food. Nothing more.

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