

5 Quick Ways to Microwave Delicious Vegetables

Today's microwave ovens are marvels of engineering, miracles of convenience, and great at preserving the nutrient content of vegetables and other foods. Nutritional value is preserved because microwaving can be done quickly (around 3-10 minutes on HIGH per pound of vegetables) and with minimal amounts of water (a few drops to a few tablespoons). Here are five tips to get perfectly microwaved veggies every time.

1. Prepare the veggies properly.

Start by washing raw vegetables thoroughly and trimming ends or bad spots, just as you would for any type of cooking. For fresh veggies that need to be cut, slice or dice all pieces into a relatively uniform size. Pierce the skins of whole vegetables such as sweet potatoes or whole carrots to allow steam to escape and prevent exploding.

2. Choose cookware carefully.

Except for whole potatoes, vegetables should be covered while microwaving. When using a glass casserole, porcelain dish, or other microwavable safe cookware, use the lid that came with it. If no lid is available, cover with high-quality, microwave-safe wrap and poke one or two small holes in the wrap for steam to escape.

3. Add water sparingly.

Use as little water as possible in cooking, so the nutrients end up in your body rather than in the water. For soft items (peas, green beans, broccoli, etc.) use 1-3 tablespoons water per pound. For more solid ones (carrots, beets, etc.), use slightly more (4-5 tablespoons) per pound. Spinach and other leafy greens only need the water that remains after rinsing.

4. Set cooking times correctly.

Most vegetables are best when cooked on HIGH until tender-crisp. Cooking times per pound will vary from oven to oven: only 3-4 minutes for leafy vegetables; 4-6 minutes for asparagus, broccoli florets, peas, and similar items; 8-10 minutes for whole carrots; and 15 minutes for beets and denser veggies. A single whole sweet potato will take 4-6 minutes.

5. Check tenderness frequently.

For the best possible results, check the vegetables half way through the suggested cooking time. Carefully remove the lid or plastic wrap to avoid burning hands with the escaping steam. Check for tenderness with a fork. To ensure uniform cooking of all vegetables - stir, rearrange, or turn over larger items.