

# SAFETY SENSE

## Microwave Cooking Tips To Keep Your Family Safe

(NAPSA)—Whether you are cooking for yourself or for your family, you should always pay attention to—and practice—proper food safety, even when you’re using your microwave. Safety in food preparation is very important for all types of cooking, whether you’re preparing dinner from scratch or microwaving a frozen meal.

“Bacteria are present in almost every food we eat, and reducing or eliminating bacteria is one of the most important factors in preventing food-borne illness,” says food expert Carolyn O’Neil. “One major solution is rather simple—and common sense in theory—foods should be cooked thoroughly, even when you use your microwave.”

O’Neil offers a few tips to help when preparing food in your microwave:

- To ensure the safety of all the foods you eat, read labels carefully and follow all preparation and cleanup directions; for example, proper cooking and standing time, storage and refrigeration, expiration dates, etc.

With any type of cooking, wash your hands before and after food preparation. Keep uncooked meats separate from cooked meats, salads and other ready-to-eat foods.

- It is important to understand what products are pre-cooked and



**Prepare your next family meal with simple-to-follow microwave food safety techniques.**

which ones require thorough cooking. Some products, labeled “ready to heat,” only need to be heated before they can be eaten. It is very important to note that a label that reads “must be cooked thoroughly” or “ready to cook” does not mean “ready to eat.” Some products, such as Banquet Pot Pies, contain raw ingredients and are labeled “must be cooked thoroughly” and must be cooked fully before they are served.

Banquet recently updated the packaging of its pot pies with microwave directions that provide illustrated, step-by-step instructions to help ensure the product is thoroughly cooked. The packaging includes information on the

importance of standing time, an essential part of the cooking process.

- Despite what many cooks think, color is not a sure indicator of whether or not food is safe to eat. To ensure the safety of your food, check the temperature of heated food in multiple areas with an instant-read food thermometer. The temperature should read between 160 and 170 degrees Fahrenheit for most foods, and specifically 165 for those pot pies. Check the food in two or three places to ensure that the temperature is even.

- Know your microwave wattage. Because wattage varies, cook times will differ for every microwave. When cooking foods, your microwave oven needs to be 1,100 watts or higher to ensure that the product is thoroughly cooked. If you have a microwave oven that is below 1,100 watts, many products should be cooked in a conventional oven to ensure thorough cooking.

- Allow standing time. Because food continues to cook after it’s heated, let food rest in the microwave according to package directions to ensure a fully cooked meal.

For more food safety and microwaving tips, you may visit [www.conagrafoods.com/mwcooking](http://www.conagrafoods.com/mwcooking).