SOFTWARE & TECH

Edmonds Microwave Cookbook

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Rediscovering the Magic of the Edmonds Microwave Cookbook

For generations of home cooks in New Zealand and beyond, the Edmonds brand has been synonymous with trust, reliability, and the cherished art of home baking. The iconic Edmonds Cookery Book, often passed down from mother to daughter, has been a kitchen staple for over a century. However, as technology evolved and the pace of modern life accelerated, a new kitchen hero emerged: the microwave oven. Recognizing this shift, the publishers behind the famous red-and-white checkered cover released a companion volume that changed the way families approached quick meals. The **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook**is far more than a collection of hastily thrown-together recipes; it is a carefully curated guide designed to unlock the full potential of the microwave, proving that speed does not have to come at the expense of flavour or nutrition. This comprehensive guide explores the enduring relevance of this cookbook, its unique features, and why it remains a valuable resource for both novice cooks and seasoned chefs looking to save time without sacrificing quality.

While the original Edmonds Cookery Book focused heavily on the oven, the **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook** addressed a growing need for convenience in the 1980s and 1990s. However, unlike many microwave recipe books of the era that were often apologetic or limited to reheating, this book was ambitious. It tackled everything from perfect scrambled eggs and steamed vegetables to moist cakes, savory casseroles, and even traditional Kiwi desserts like sponge pudding. The brilliance of this cookbook lies in its understanding that the microwave is not just a reheating appliance; it is a unique cooking tool that requires specific techniques regarding timing, power levels, and moisture retention. By demystifying these techniques, the Edmonds Microwave Cookbook empowered a generation of cooks to prepare wholesome, home-cooked meals in a fraction of the time.

The Legacy of the Edmonds Cookery Book and the Microwave Edition

To truly appreciate the significance of the **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook**, one must first understand the cultural weight of the original Edmonds Cookery Book. First published in 1908 by the Edmonds Food Company as a promotional tool for their baking powder, the book quickly became a national treasure. Its recipes were tested, trusted, and deeply ingrained in the collective memory of the country. The arrival of the microwave edition did not seek to replace this classic but rather to extend its practicality into the modern era.

During the late 20th century, microwave ovens were becoming commonplace in New Zealand kitchens. However, many early microwave cookbooks were disappointing. They often produced rubbery vegetables, tough meat, or bland desserts. The Edmonds team took a different approach. They applied the same rigorous testing standards of the original cookbook to microwave cooking. The result was a book that treated microwave cookery with the seriousness it deserved. This edition allowed families to maintain the tradition of home-cooked meals even when time was short. It bridged the gap between the old world of slow baking and the new world of instant cooking, making it a pivotal publication in the history of New Zealand domestic life.

Why the Edmonds Microwave Cookbook Stands Out

In a crowded market of recipe books, the **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook**distinguishes itself through several key attributes. It is not merely a list of recipes; it is a comprehensive manual that teaches the user how to cook with microwaves effectively.

Focus on Technique and Timing

One of the most frustrating aspects of microwave cooking for beginners is the lack of immediate feedback. Unlike an oven where you can see browning or an oven-top where you can hear sizzling, the microwave requires a leap of faith. This cookbook excels by providing clear, concise instructions regarding power levels (high, medium, low) and standing times. It explains why letting a dish rest after cooking is crucial for heat distribution and why covering a dish with plastic wrap or a lid creates steam necessary for tender results. This focus on foundational technique transforms the user from a button-pusher into a confident microwave chef.

Diverse Recipe Range

Many people assume a microwave cookbook is limited to frozen dinners or popcorn. The **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook** shatters this misconception. It includes chapters on:

- Vegetables: Techniques for steaming fresh broccoli, carrots, and silverbeet to vibrant perfection.
- Eggs and Cheese: Foolproof methods for poached eggs, scrambled eggs, and quick cheese sauces.
- Soups and Sauces: Rapid stocks and creamy sauces without the need for constant stirring.
- Fish and Chicken: Methods for poaching fish fillets and cooking chicken breasts that remain moist and tender.
- Rice and Pasta: Timings for perfectly cooked rice without boiling over.
- Cakes and Desserts: Famous recipes for microwave sponge puddings, mug cakes, and fruit crumbles with a crispy topping achieved via combination cooking.

Practicality for Everyday Life

The recipes in this book are designed for real people with real schedules. They use common, affordable ingredients that can be found in any New Zealand pantry. There are no complicated reductions or esoteric spices. The focus is on efficiency, reducing washing up (often one-pot or one-bowl recipes), and getting a nutritious meal on the table quickly. For a working parent or a university student living in a flat, this practicality is invaluable. The cookbook understands that sometimes, the goal is not a Michelin-star dinner but a hearty, comforting meal that tastes like home.

Key Features and Content Highlights

A deeper look into the structure of the **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook**reveals why it has remained a trusted resource.

Power Level Guidance

Unlike modern microwaves that have presets for "popcorn" or "baked potato," the cookbook often refers to power levels as percentages (e.g., 70% power, 100% power). This is a critical feature because it teaches the user to understand their machine. The book provides conversion tips for microwaves of different wattages, which is a common pain point for users who follow recipes from other sources. A recipe designed for an 800-watt microwave will fail in a 1200-watt model, but the Edmonds book provides methods for adjusting time and power to ensure success.

Standing Times and Venting

Throughout the book, you will see a strong emphasis on standing times. This is not wasted space; it is a core principle of microwave physics. The book explains that food continues to cook after the microwave stops, as

heat radiates inward. Ignoring standing time is one of the primary reasons for undercooked or unevenly cooked microwave food. Additionally, the cookbook provides clear instructions on venting - leaving a small gap when covering dishes to prevent steam buildup and explosions, a practical tip that saves many a messy cleanup.

Combination Cooking

For those with combination microwave ovens (which include a grill or convection element), the **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook**offers advanced recipes that use both functions. This allows for browning and crisping that a standard microwave cannot achieve. Recipes for roast chicken with a crispy skin or golden-brown muffins become possible, expanding the culinary range of the appliance significantly. This forward-thinking inclusion showed that the editors understood the future trajectory of kitchen appliances.

Popular Recipes from the Cookbook

Certain recipes from the **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook**have achieved legendary status among those who grew up using it. They are the recipes that are dog-eared and stained, passed around family groups and shared online.

Classic Microwave Sponge Pudding

This is perhaps the most iconic recipe in the book. A light, fluffy sponge cake cooked in a microwave-safe basin, often served with golden syrup or jam poured over the top before cooking. The magic of this recipe is that it cooks in roughly 4-5 minutes, compared to 30-40 minutes in a conventional steamer or oven. The result is a warm, comforting dessert that tastes as if it has been baking all afternoon. The key is the high heat and quick steam created by covering the basin with plastic wrap.

Perfect Poached Eggs

Poaching eggs on the stove-top can be intimidating, requiring a gentle whirlpool and precise vinegar ratios. The microwave method in the Edmonds book is revolutionary for its simplicity. Boiling water is poured into a cup or ramekin, an egg is cracked in, and the cup is covered and microwaved for a precise time. The result is a perfectly cooked egg with a runny yolk and set white, without the wispy edges of the stovetop method. This single recipe has likely saved countless breakfasts.

Quick Mince and Vegetable Casserole

A staple for busy families, this recipe teaches how to brown mince in the microwave (yes, it is possible) and then combine it with vegetables and a gravy base. The entire process, from start to finish, takes about 15 minutes. It is a filling, nutritious, and budget-friendly meal that demonstrates the versatility of the microwave for savory cooking. The recipe emphasizes using a large bowl to prevent boiling over and covering to trap heat for even cooking.

Steamed Vegetables with Lemon Butter

This is a foundational recipe that changed how many people viewed vegetables. Overcooked, soggy broccoli was a thing of the past. The Edmonds method uses a minimum of water (often just a tablespoon) and a tight-fitting lid or plastic wrap to steam vegetables quickly. The result is bright, crisp-tender vegetables that retain their nutrients and colour. The simple addition of lemon butter elevates the dish from side to star.

Tips for Getting the Most Out of the Cookbook

Owning the **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook**is just the first step. To truly master the art of microwave cooking as laid out in its pages, consider the following tips:

1. Know Your Wattage: Before you start, find your microwave's wattage (usually listed on the back or in the manual). Most Edmonds recipes are written for 700-800 watt ovens. If yours is more powerful, reduce the

cooking time by 10-20%. If less powerful, increase the time.

2. Use the Right Dish: The cookbook specifies microwave-safe materials. Avoid metal and thin plastic that can warp. Round dishes are generally better than square ones because microwaves can concentrate in corners, causing food to cook unevenly.

3. Respect Standing Time: Do not skip the standing time mentioned in the recipe. This is not optional resting; it is an integral part of the cooking process. Use a kitchen timer to track it.

4. Stir and Rotate: Even with a turntable, microwaves can have hot spots. Stirring halfway through cooking, as the book often suggests, ensures even heat distribution. If your microwave does not have a turntable, manually rotate the dish.

5. Cover Correctly: Use microwave-safe plastic wrap, a microwave lid, or a damp paper towel. The cover traps steam, which helps cook food evenly and keeps it moist. Leave a small vent for steam to escape to prevent explosions.

The Cookbook's Place in Modern Kitchens

In an age of food blogs and instant recipe videos, you might wonder if a physical **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook**still has relevance. The answer is a resounding yes. While digital content is abundant, it often lacks the rigorous testing and cohesive philosophy of a traditional cookbook. The Edmonds book offers a system of cooking, not just a list of random recipes. Furthermore, for young adults moving away from home for the first time, owning a microwave is often more common than owning a full oven. This cookbook provides them with the tools to eat well, avoid expensive takeaways, and build confidence in the kitchen.

Moreover, the cookbook serves as a historical document of a pivotal shift in domestic technology. It captures the optimism of the late 20th century regarding labor-saving devices. It also holds a nostalgic value for many, evoking memories of childhood dinners and quick desserts prepared by busy parents. In a world that is only getting faster, the lessons of efficiency and simplicity found in the **Edmonds Microwave Cookbook**are perhaps more valuable now than ever. It encourages home cooking

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