



Microwave mania

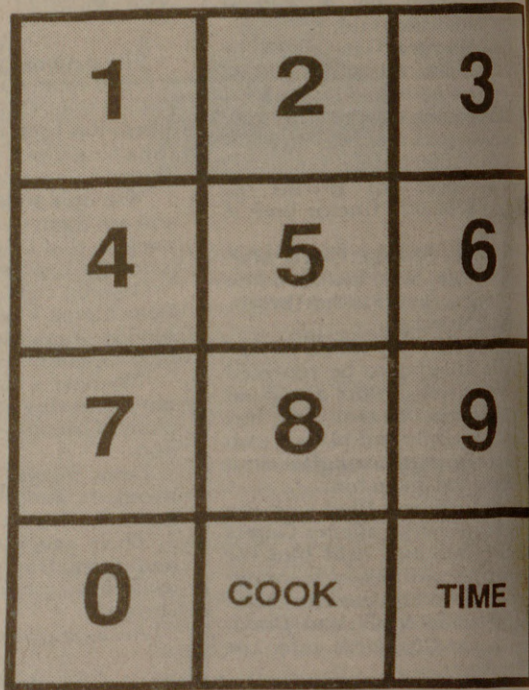


Photo illustration by Mike C. Mulvey

By PATRICK HAYS
Of The Battalion Staff

Microwave cooking has become as much a part of American life as hot dogs and apple pie. The ovens can be found in restaurants, houses, apartments and dorm rooms from coast to coast. For many people, two-minute meals are daily events, and eating in extremely short time periods is second nature.

The microwave cooking explosion has raised some interesting questions, leaving consumers and industry people pondering over their pizza.

One of the most common questions surrounding the phenomenon is that of nutrition. Many people believe that since little preparation goes into microwave cooking, it is not healthy, but nutritionists tell us differently.

Linda Kapusniak, director of nutritional services at HCA Greenleaf Hospital in College Station, says a diet consisting of mostly microwaved food is just as nutritious as one consisting of conventionally cooked foods.

"You can get just as balanced a diet with microwaved foods," Kapusniak said. No vitamins are lost in cooking, and some foods, such as vegetables, are more nutritious when microwaved because fewer nutrients are lost than in conventional cooking methods.

The actual cooking which takes place in a microwave is a result of a molecular process. A magnetron, or small microwave transmitter, shapes electromagnetic energy into microwaves, which are reflected to the food by a stirrer. The microwaves excite water molecules within the food, thus heating it.

Kapusniak says a good rule of thumb to go by when selecting frozen entrees is to choose items with fewer than 10 grams of fat per 300 calories. She also advises choosing foods with 800 milligrams or less of sodium. The maximum recommended amount of sodium per meal is 1000 milligrams.

Kapusniak says, however, that most microwave foods exceed that sodium level, because sodium acts as a preservative.

She says the only real drawback to microwave foods is that they lack fiber, but that can be supplemented easily.

She warns about buying foods marked with the "lite" label. Use of the term "lite" is not regulated, and it could mean anything, she says.

"It could be lighter in color. It could be lighter in salt," Kapusniak says.

HCA Greenleaf nutrition consultant Celeste Thornton says, "It's such a widely used marketing tool, not to the benefit of the consumer."

Thornton offers a tip for producing well-balanced meals. She recommends eating foods such as fruit or bread with microwaved foods to get a proper balance of nutrients.

Many students depend on microwave foods for a significant part of their diets.

Melissa Peffers, a senior civil engineering major from San Antonio, says her diet consists of about 40 percent microwave foods. She says she eats a lot of frozen entrees, vegetables and potatoes, and that convenience is the main factor in her choices.

"I don't call microwaving cooking," Peffers says.

She says she has followed this type of diet for four years, and does not anticipate changing her habits when she leaves school.

"I'll probably stick with microwaving," she says.

Another question raised by the microwave cooking phenomenon is that of its potential effect on the grocery foods market.

Ben Mazow, media spokesman for Skaggs Alpha Beta, says customers like Peffers' increasing demand for microwave foods is an inconvenience stores do not mind. He says stores have to shuffle or increase freezer space to accommodate the wide selection of microwave foods, but says it is a welcome task.

He adds that even if microwave foods were not competing for space, some other type of food would be. "Given the benefit, we're happy to

have the complication, because would have had the complication anyway," Mazow says.

Another favorable effect of the increase in microwave cooking is that it allows more people to eat at home. Many people stop and pick up an entree or two on the way home from work, instead of stopping at a fast food restaurant. Mazow adds that many people are tired of fast food, and that microwave foods are attractive because they offer better selection in single serving sizes.

Mazow says that on the whole, stores are pleased with the microwave craze.

"Basically, it adds to customer variety and choice ... which we love," he says.

Judging from the continued success of the microwave industry, Americans love it, too.

Mormon students seek links with ancient Indian cultures

By M. ELAINE HORN
Of The Battalion Staff

During spring break, many students flock to the beaches of Mexico to enjoy the surf and sand and to visit the many bars with cheap margaritas.

This year, however, a group of Texas A&M students from the Latter Day Saints Students Association staged a new twist to this traditional scenario. They used the spring break opportunity to explore some of their basic beliefs of the Mormon religion.

The highlights of their trip were the pyramids of the sun and the moon and the ancient ruins. Andrew Speckhard, LDSSA president, says the ruins and the pyramids relate to the Book of Mormon. Speckhard, a graduate student in business, says the Book of Mormon discusses an ancient civilization which was the ancestor of the Incas and the Mayans.

"For us to see the Pyramids ... was evidence to testify to the Book of Mormon," Speckhard says. "Especially since I was a convert to the church, I was real excited to see the places in the Book of Mormon." Speckhard converted to the Mormon faith ten years ago when he was in high school.

Marianne Matis, vice-president of LDSSA, says that her main purpose for going was to see the ruins. "It was the best part for me ... something we couldn't see anywhere else."

The Mormon religion has many churches, but it has only 42 temples worldwide. In these temples, Mormons can perform "ordinances," which are considered service work. One such temple exists in Mexico City, and the group spent a day of their trip performing ordinances in the temple.

Speckhard says three major

types of ordinances exist — sealings, baptisms for the dead, and endowments. Sealings are a ceremony in which couples can be married for "time and all eternity" instead of the traditional "until death do we part."

Baptisms for the dead are baptisms performed on behalf of deceased people by proxy. Speckhard says they are usually performed for ancestors who did not have the chance to be baptized before their death. In heaven, he says, they can accept or reject the baptism. They are not forced to be saved, Speckhard says.

"For us to see the Pyramids ... was evidence to testify to the Book of Mormon,"

—Andrew Speckhard, LDSSA president

Speckhard says that a special feature of performing the ordinances in the Mexico temple was that the ordinances were conducted entirely in Spanish.

"It was neat to perform ordinances in the language we learned on our missions," he says.

The Mormon church strongly suggests that men at age 19 and women at age 21 go on a mission, Speckhard says. Many of the students on the trip had spent their missions in Spanish-speaking countries.

Speckhard says the ordinances

are service work because they are helping people who did not have the chance to hear "the message."

In addition to visiting the pyramid of the sun and the pyramid of the moon, they visited the museum of anthropology and attended the national Ballet Folklorico in Mexico City.

The group planned their trip for seven months. Much of the planning went towards financing the trip. Each person paid \$115, but the remaining \$7800 needed for the trip was collected through fundraisers and donations.

To raise money for the trip, students sold parking passes at football games in the fall. The church owns two parking lots near the Former Students Center which are popular during game days. They also held an auction and a yard sale. Additional money was raised through t-shirt sales and donations.

Matis says the trip lived up to her expectations, but she was surprised by how much of the ruins actually remained standing.

"In Rome, much of it is destroyed," she says. "In Mexico ... there is more than just a few little stones. There are actual complete buildings."

It was rewarding to discover more about his religion, Speckhard says. He enjoyed being able to spend spring break with people who shared his beliefs and wanted to learn more about them.

"The trip helped me to have a greater appreciation for the Book of Mormon," Speckhard says. "I saw evidence of great civilizations ... they had to be great to build structures like that."

After the many months of waiting for the trip, Matis says, it has been difficult to go back to a regular schedule. "I'm still dazed that it's all over."

Texas wildflowers near full bloom

By HELEN WOLFE
Of The Battalion Staff

Spring finally has arrived, and what better time than now to see the unlimited viewing of Texas wildflower trails?

Texas wildflowers can be found along highways, in residential districts, along self-guided trails and in country meadows.

With more than 5,000 wildflower species in Texas — more than in any other state — the sights can seem endless.

Dr. Douglas F. Welsh, Texas A&M extension service horticulturist, said wildflowers bloom from around mid-March until October.

"Indian Paintbrush is blooming up a storm," he said.

Texas bluebonnet, the state's official flower, verbenas and wild phlox also are blooming, Welsh said.

Geography can be credited for the great abundance of Texas plants, according to a State Department of Highways and Public Transportation pamphlet, "Flowers of Texas."

Welsh said climate diversity and long blooming seasons are why wildflowers bloom so well in Texas.

"Washington County has some of the best wildflowers in the state," Welsh said.

Fayetteville, LaGrange and Brenham are also good areas to see wildflowers, he said.

Many of the wildflower species can be found along Texas highways.

The Texas State Department of Highways and Public Transportation has planted and preserved wildflowers for more than 40 years.

The Department is the nation's largest "landscape gardener," with more than 800,000 acres to care for.

"The general focus of wildflower trails is by highways," Welsh said. "Texas A&M mows too much to encourage any wildflowers."

However, Rudy's Exxon Service Station at 815 S. Texas has a wildflower trail of bluebonnets.

Owner Rudy Prigge said he started cultivating in early September of last year and planted the first

seeds last September.

Whether or not any of these wildflowers can be picked is a question Welsh could not answer definitively. "I would not encourage it, but it's fun to take pictures," he said.

For more information about Texas wildflower trails, write to Box 5064, Austin, Texas 78750-0604, for a free copy of the Highway Department's "Flowers of Texas" brochure.



Photo by Frederick D. Jr.

Indian paintbrushes are blooming well along Texas highways. Wildflowers cannot be picked in all areas, however.