

Go Green diary

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[news/2009/12/01/\)](http://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/north-east-news/the-environment/go-green-news/2009/12/01/) By Steve Emsley,
Evening Chronicle

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In the era of rising electricity prices and energy-saving, Steve Emsley asks: What's green about microwave cooking?

MORE than 80% of households have a microwave oven.

Many just warm up milk, defrost something or heat up a ready meal. The adventurous might try scrambling an egg in one.

After a recent trip to an evening session run by Real Food Works from Ashington, I think it is time to look at the microwave as a much more versatile energy-saving appliance.

Microwaves have a number of advantages over electric or gas ovens. The average energy used by an electric oven is considerably higher than a microwave. Most recipes using conventional electric ovens suggest warming the oven first, and the cooking time is often three to five times as long as in a microwave.

The energy used cooking with a microwave is often between 10% and 25% of that used when using a conventional oven.

So if you want to make a big cut in carbon emissions when cooking, try out the microwave. They also rarely bake food on to pans so take less hot water to clean up after.

Cooking with a microwave means cooking the food from the inside, not having to heat up lots of water first, or lots of metal in a conventional oven. Less nutrients are wasted and washed out of the food, so all the more for you.

If you think that microwave cooking is not seriously useful, then have a look at the website www.realfoodworks.co.uk (<http://www.realfoodworks.co.uk/>) you will find around 90 interesting recipes. These include tomato and basil soup, cullen skink, spicy rice and chickpeas, Thai vegetable curry, Christmas cheesecake (with none of the E numbers) and beetroot and orange cake.

A quick test is the muffin recipe. It takes five minutes to prepare and one-to-two minutes to cook, so why not give it a try. Alternatively you can check the catalogue

of Newcastle libraries and you will find numerous books on the subject, one has a thousand recipes in it. All those recipes can't be wrong.

Probably some of the easiest things to start with are soups or casseroles. Chilli con carne or leek and potato soup. I am away to try out a curried parsnip soup idea. It is that time of year on the allotment when the parsnips are ready and it would be a shame not to start using them up. Parsnip cake anyone? It can be done.

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