

# Hurried Woman Sues Over Cook Time Instructions

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November 29, 2022

Time is money, and when you're hungry for mac-and-cheese, a few seconds can be worth millions of dollars. Or at least that's what a Florida woman suggests in her class action lawsuit against Kraft Heinz over a claim on single-serve cups of Velveeta Shells & Cheese stating that the product can be "ready in 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> minutes."

Alas, life isn't always that easy, and a close look at the instructions reveals that 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> minutes is just the amount of time it takes for the product to cook in the microwave. You also need to do things like remove the lid, add water, and stir. That takes extra time, so our woman in Florida argues that the claim on the front of the package is false and misleading.



(The woman doesn't say how long it took her to complete these extra steps, but in our tests, a person with moderate culinary skills can manage them in under 60 seconds. You may quibble and say that if I had waited for the cheese to thicken, it would have taken longer. But I'd tell you that if I didn't have two dogs underfoot, I could have moved faster. So let's call it 60 seconds.)

The extra 60 seconds may not be a big deal to some, but the plaintiff argues that underestimating cook time "offends established public policy and is immoral, unethical, oppressive, and unscrupulous to consumers." It has shaken her faith not only in the instructions for this particular product, but also for "other similar products that claim they are ready in a specific amount of time."

The plaintiff claims that she and other class members who endured extra minutes of hunger have suffered over \$5 million in damages. But the case isn't just about the money. The plaintiff also wants the court to order Kraft Heinz to "engage in a corrective advertising campaign" to inform consumers that the product takes longer than 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> minutes to be ready for consumption.

What can you learn from this suit? If you're a business, review claims to make sure they are as precise as possible. Even though Kraft Heinz will likely win this case, a slight change in wording may have helped them avoid it, in the first place. If you're a consumer who is pressed for time, review cooking instructions before you buy something. Five seconds up-front could save you 60 seconds of frustration later.