

▶ GETTING YOUR CROCK POT READY TO USE



▶ CONVERTING RECIPES AND TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▶ HEALTHY & DELICIOUS SLOW COOKER RECIPES

# Unleash the Magic Of Your Slow Cooker

Imagine ... you open the door after a hard day at work and are immediately hit with a delicious smell coming from the kitchen. If you're lucky, the maid has prepared dinner; however, if you're like me, it means you prepared dinner in the slow cooker that morning before leaving.

With our busy lifestyles, slow cookers (crock pots) are making a big comeback. They are wonderful because they (1) make even tough cuts of meat tender, (2) cook without being tended, (3) take away the "what's for dinner" dilemma, etc.

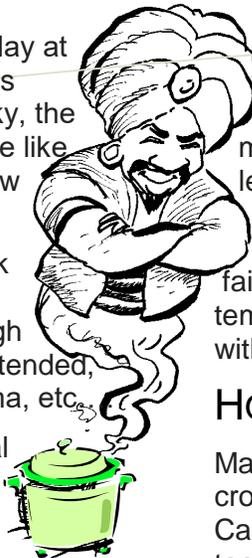
How does it work? This countertop electrical appliance cooks foods slowly at a low temp – generally between 170°-280°F. The low heat helps less expensive, leaner cuts of meat become tender and reduces shrinkage.

The direct heat, lengthy cooking and steam created within the tightly-covered container combines to destroy bacteria and make the slow cooker a safe process for cooking foods.

## MAKE SURE IT'S WORKING PROPERLY

Although a timesaver, what if it isn't cooking properly? When is the last time, if ever, that you have checked it? Do you know what to look for? It can be checked easily and will give you peace of mind that your appliance is working properly and will continue to provide safe, efficient meals for your family.

First, check for obvious signs of age and/or damage, such as a cracked or broken crockery liner, frayed cord, or damaged plug. Next, test its performance



and reliability. Place two quarts (8 cups) of water in the slow cooker and set the temperature to *Low*. After two hours, use a food thermometer to make sure the temperature of the water reaches at least 165°F. The temperature test should be conducted while someone is at home and can check the appliance periodically. If the appliance fails to heat the water to the recommended temperatures, it should be discarded and replaced with a new one. Follow proper disposal procedures.

## HOW TO CONVERT RECIPES

Many recipes can be converted to cooking in the crock pot. Soups and stews are natural favorites. Casseroles and most meats benefit from the low temperatures and even cooking heat.

Reduce the amount of liquid a recipe calls for, since liquids do not evaporate during slow-cooker cooking. However, if you are cooking rice, beans, or pasta, don't reduce the liquid called for. You generally need twice as much liquid as product to cook these ingredients. Here are basic conversion times:



If conventional time is 15 to 30 minutes, then cooking time on *Low* should be 4 to 6 hours.



If conventional time is 35 to 45 minutes, cooking time on *Low* should be 6 to 8 hours.



If conventional time is 50 minutes to 3 hours, cooking time on *Low* should be 8 to 16 hours.

**NOTE:** Most raw meat and vegetable combinations are best cooked for 8 hours on *Low*. This gives the

vegetables time to soften, the meat time to tenderize and all the flavors to blend.

## TIPS FOR CROCK POT SUCCESS



Buy roasts and other large cuts of meat that will fit in your slow cooker, or plan to trim them to fit.



Remove skin from poultry and trim excess fat from other meats before cooking.



Fresh root vegetables, such as potatoes, carrots, and onions, should be placed in the bottom of the pot, under the meat, for faster cooking. They tend to cook more slowly.



When thickening sauces near the end of cooking time, turn the heat setting to *HIGH* to speed the process. Taste the liquid first; if it lacks flavor, it may be best to reduce by simmering several minutes uncovered.



Browning meats (especially ground meat) helps reduce fat content in large cuts of meat like roasts. It also caramelizes the sugars in the meat, adding to appearance and flavor.



Seafood should be added during the last hour of cooking time, or it will overcook and have a rubbery texture.



Don't lift the lid to stir, especially if you are cooking on the *LOW* setting. Each time you lift the lid, enough heat will escape that the cooking time should be extended by 20 to 30 minutes. To check progress without lifting the lid, spin the cover until the condensation falls off. Then it's easy to see inside.



Only fill the slow cooker  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  full. The foods will not cook properly if the appliance is filled to the brim. If the food and liquid level is lower, the foods will cook too quickly.



Cayenne pepper and hot sauces tend to become bitter if cooked for long periods of time. Use small amounts and add toward the end of the cooking time.



Add tender vegetables like tomatoes, mushrooms and zucchini during the last 45 minutes of cooking time so they don't overcook.



Dairy products should be added during the last 30 minutes of cooking time, unless the recipe states otherwise.



## CREAMY MUSHROOM CHICKEN

6 (4-5 ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts

2 (10  $\frac{3}{4}$  ounce) cans fat-free cream soup (chicken, mushroom, celery)

1 (4 ounce) can mushrooms

Place chicken breasts in the slow cooker. Pour both cans of undiluted soup over the chicken. Place the lid on; cook on *LOW* 8-10 hours. Add mushrooms 45 minutes before end of cooking time.

1/6<sup>th</sup> Recipe (calculated with fat-free cream of celery) = 160 calories, 14 g fat, 26 g protein, 13 g carbohydrates, 1g fiber, 728 mg sodium

## OH SO EASY PORK CHOPS & GRAVY

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup all-purpose flour

1 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon dry mustard

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon garlic powder

6 (1-inch thick) lean pork chops

1 can condensed chicken broth, undiluted

Non-stick cooking spray

Combine dry ingredients in a shallow dish; mix well. Dredge pork chops in flour mixture and set aside. Combine remaining flour mixture and chicken broth in slow cooker. Whisk well to remove any lumps. Lightly spray skillet with non-stick cooking spray. Place over medium high heat. Cook chops just until browned on both sides. Place in slow cooker. Cover and cook on *HIGH* for 2 to 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours or until chops are tender. Serve with hot rice or mashed potatoes.

## BBQ PORK SANDWICHES

1 (14 ounce) can beef broth

3 lbs. boneless pork ribs

1 (18 ounce) bottle barbecue sauce

Pour broth into slow cooker; add pork ribs. Cook on *HIGH* heat for 4 hours or until meat shreds easily. Remove meat; shred with two forks. Preheat oven to 350°F. Transfer shredded pork to Dutch oven or iron skillet; stir in barbecue sauce. Bake in preheated oven for 30 minutes, or until heated through.

1/12<sup>th</sup> Recipe = 355 calories, 18 g fat, 30 g protein, 15 g carbohydrates, 0.3 g fiber, 623 mg sodium

## EASY MEATBALLS & NOODLES

- 2 (10.75 ounce) cans low fat cream of celery soup
- 2 (10.5 ounce) cans condensed French onion soup
- 1 (16 ounce) container fat-free sour cream
- 6 lbs. frozen Italian-style meatballs
- 2 (16 ounce) packages uncooked egg noodles

In a large slow cooker, mix together the cream of celery, French onion soup, and sour cream; stir in meatballs. Cook on *HIGH* heat for 3-4 hours or *LOW* heat for 6-8 hours.

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until al dente; drain. Serve meatballs and sauce over pasta.

1/24<sup>th</sup> Recipe = 383 calories, 22 g fat, 21 g protein, 25 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 591 mg sodium

## SAVORY POT ROAST WITH VEGGIES

- 1 (10.75 ounce) can low-fat cream of mushroom soup
- 1 (2 ounce) pouch dry onion soup mix
- 6 small red potatoes, halved
- 6 medium carrots, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 (3 pound) boneless beef bottom round roast or chuck pot roast

Stir the soup, onion soup mix, potatoes and carrots in a 4 ½ quart slow cooker. Add the beef and turn to coat. Cover and cook on *LOW* for 8 to 9 hours or until the beef is fork tender. Serves 12.

## QUICK AND EASY CLAM CHOWDER

- 1 (10.75 ounce) can cream of celery soup\*
- 1 (10.75 ounce) can cream of potato soup\*
- 1 (10.75 ounce) can New England clam chowder\*
- 2 (6.5 ounce) cans minced clams
- 1 quart half-and-half cream
- 1 pint heavy whipping cream

\*use low-fat/low-sodium soups

Mix cream of celery soup, cream of potato soup, clam chowder, 1 can drained clams, half-and-half cream, and whipping cream into a slow cooker. Cover and cook on *LOW* for 6 to 8 hours.



## ENCHILADAS

- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 1 cup chopped onions
- ½ cup chopped green peppers
- 1 (16 ounce) can no-salt-added red kidney beans, rinsed & drained
- 1 (15 ounce) can no-salt-added pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 (10 ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chilies, undrained
- 1/3 cup water
- 1 ½ teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup shredded fat-free sharp cheddar cheese
- ½ cup shredded reduced-fat Monterey Jack cheese
- 8 (6-7-inch) whole wheat flour tortillas



Cook beef, onions and green peppers in skillet until beef is browned and vegetables are tender. Drain and pat dry. Add next 7 ingredients; bring to a boil. Reduce heat. Cover & simmer 10 minutes. Combine cheeses and set aside.

Spray inside of slow cooker with non-stick cooking spray (or insert liner bag). Layer about ¾ cup beef mixture, one tortilla, and about ⅓ cup cheeses. Repeat layers. Cover. Cook on *LOW* for 5 to 7 hours or until heated through.

To serve, reach to bottom with each spoonful to get all layers (or carefully invert onto large platter and cut into wedges). Serve with fat-free sour cream, guacamole, lettuce, and diced tomatoes.

## CHICKEN AND DUMPLINGS

- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 2 tablespoons lower fat butter or margarine
- 2 (10.75 ounce) cans low-fat cream of chicken soup
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 (10 ounce) packages refrigerated biscuit dough, torn into pieces

Place the chicken, butter, soup and onion in slow cooker and fill with enough water to cover. Cover and cook for 5 to 6 hours on *HIGH*. About 30 minutes

before serving, place the torn biscuit dough in the slow cooker. Cook until dough is no longer raw in the center.

1/8<sup>th</sup> Recipe = 385 calories, 18 g fat, 18 g protein, 37 g carbohydrates, 0.7 g fiber, 1245 mg sodium

## TACO SOUP

- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 (16 ounce) can chili beans, undrained
- 1 (15 ounce) can kidney beans, undrained
- 1 (15 ounce) can whole kernel corn, undrained
- 1 (8 ounce) can tomato sauce
- 2 cups water
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans peeled and diced tomatoes
- 1 (4 ounce) can diced green chile peppers
- 1 (1.25 ounce) package taco seasoning mix

In medium skillet, cook the ground beef until browned; drain and set aside. Place ground beef, onion, chili beans, kidney beans, corn, tomato sauce, water, diced tomatoes, green chile peppers and taco seasoning mix in a slow cooker. Mix to blend. Cook on *LOW* for 8 hours.

1/8<sup>th</sup> Recipe = 362 calories, 16 g fat, 18 g protein, 38 g carbohydrates, 8.5 g fiber, 1354 mg sodium

## MARINARA CHICKEN & VEGGIES

- 2 lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled & crushed
- 4 tomatoes, chopped OR 1 (14.5 ounce) can low-sodium tomatoes, drained
- 4 medium ribs celery, diced (1 cup)
- 2 small zucchini, diced (2 cups)
- 1 bell pepper, cored, seeded & diced
- 1 (18 ounce) jar low-sodium marinara sauce
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme

Place the chicken in the slow cooker; add the garlic, tomatoes, celery, zucchini, and pepper. Pour the marinara sauce over all; sprinkle the basil and thyme on top. Cook for 6 to 7 hours on *LOW*. Before serving, shred the chicken with a fork.

164 calories, 2 g fat, 27 g protein, 7.9 g carbohydrates



## CAJUN SHRIMP AND RICE

- 1 (28 ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (14 ounce) can chicken broth
- 1 cup chopped onions
- 1 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1 (6 ounce) package long-grain-and-wild rice mix
- ¼ cup water
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- ½ teaspoon Cajun seasoning
- 1 pound cooked, shelled and deveined shrimp
- Hot pepper sauce (optional)

In a 4-quart slow cooker, combine tomatoes with the juices, chicken broth, onions, bell pepper, rice mix with seasoning packet, water, garlic, and Cajun seasoning. Cover; cook for 5 to 6 on *LOW* or 3 to 3 ½ hours on *HIGH*. Stir shrimp into rice mixture. Cover; cook for 15 minutes longer at the *HIGH* setting. Sprinkle with hot pepper sauce if desired.

1/6<sup>th</sup> Recipe = 223 calories, 2 g fat, 21 g protein, 32 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 1245 mg sodium

## SPICY BLACK-EYED PEAS

- 6 cups water
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- 1 lb. dried black-eyed peas, sorted & rinsed
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded & diced
- 1 jalapeño chile, seeded and minced
- 8 ounces diced ham
- 4 slices bacon, chopped
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 ½ teaspoons cumin
- Salt and pepper to taste



Pour the water into a slow cooker; add the bouillon cube and stir to dissolve. Combine the black-eyed peas, onion, garlic, bell pepper, jalapeño pepper, ham, bacon, cayenne pepper, cumin, salt and pepper; stir to blend. Cover; cook for 6 to 8 hours on *LOW*, until the beans are tender.

1/10<sup>th</sup> Recipe = 217 calories, 3.9 g fat, 15.9 g protein, 30.6 g carbohydrates, 5.7 g fiber, 526 mg sodium

## MASHED POTATOES

- 5 pounds red potatoes, cut into chunks
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic, or to taste
- 3 cubes chicken bouillon
- 1 (8 ounce) container low fat sour cream
- 1 (8 ounce) package low fat cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup lower-fat butter or margarine

In a large pot of lightly salted water, cook the potatoes, garlic and bouillon until potatoes are tender but firm, about 15 minutes. Drain, reserving water. In a bowl, mash potatoes with cheeses, adding reserved water as needed to attain desired consistency. Transfer potato mixture to a slow cooker; cook on *LOW* for 2 to 3 hours. Just before serving, stir in margarine and season with salt and pepper to taste.

## ALFREDO GREEN BEANS



- Nonstick cooking spray
- 2 (9 ounce) packages frozen cut green beans
- 1 ½ cups chopped red sweet pepper (2 medium)
- 1 (10 ounce) container refrigerated light Alfredo sauce
- 1 cup chopped onion (1 large)
- 1 (8 ounce) can sliced water chestnuts, drained
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ cup Parmesan-flavored croutons, optional

Lightly coat the inside of a 4-quart slow cooker with cooking spray. In a large bowl, combine beans, pepper, Alfredo sauce, onion, water chestnuts, and garlic salt. Spoon mixture into prepared cooker. Cover and cook on *LOW* for 5 to 6 hours or on *HIGH* for 2 ½ to 3 hours. Serve with a slotted spoon. If desired, sprinkle with crushed croutons.

1/8<sup>th</sup> Recipe = 117 calories, 5 g fat, 4 g protein, 14 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 358 mg sodium

## HERBED WILD RICE

- 2 cups fresh button mushrooms, quartered
- 2 medium carrots, sliced
- 1 ½ cups chopped onion (3 medium)
- 1 cup uncooked wild rice, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup uncooked brown rice, rinsed and drained

- 1 teaspoon dried basil, crushed
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
- ½ teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon lower-fat butter or margarine
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 (14 ounce) cans vegetable or chicken broth

In a 4-quart slow cooker, combine mushrooms, carrots, onions, wild rice, brown rice, basil, thyme, rosemary, pepper, garlic and margarine. Pour undrained tomatoes and broth over mixture. Cover; cook for 6 to 7 hours on *LOW* or for 3 to 3 ½ hours on *HIGH*. Stir before serving.

1/12<sup>th</sup> Recipe = 143 calories, 2 g fat, 4 g protein, 28 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 333 mg sodium

## EASY FAVORITE SIDES – BAKED POTATO OR CORN ON THE COB

To bake potatoes, wash and dry 4 large baking potatoes. Spray with nonstick cooking spray; sprinkle with seasonings of your choice. Wrap each one in foil; place in slow cooker. **DO NOT ADD WATER & DO NOT PIERCE.** Cook on *LOW* for about 8 hours.

To bake corn on the cob, start with 3-6 ears of sweet corn. Husk and remove silk. Lay each ear on a sheet of aluminum foil. Spray with butter spray and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Wrap in foil. Add ½ cup of water to the crock and then lay in the corn. Cook for 3 hours on *LOW*.

## BERRY COBBLER

- 1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour, *divided*
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 cup sugar, *divided*
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup skim milk
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups unsweetened raspberries
- 2 cups unsweetened blueberries
- 2 cups low-fat vanilla frozen yogurt, optional



In a large bowl, combine 1 cup flour, 2 tablespoons sugar, baking powder and cinnamon. In a small bowl, combine the egg, milk and oil; stir into dry ingredients just until moistened (batter will be thick). Spread batter evenly onto the bottom of a 5-quart slow cooker coated with cooking spray.

In a large bowl, combine the salt and remaining flour and sugar; add berries and toss to coat. Spread over batter. Cover and cook on *HIGH* for 2 to 2 ½ hours or until a toothpick inserted into cobbler comes out without crumbs. Top each serving with ¼ cup frozen yogurt, if desired. Serves 8.

1 serving (calculated without frozen yogurt) = 250 calories, 4 g fat, 3 g protein, 51 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 142 mg sodium

## SPICED CARAMEL APPLES

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

⅛ teaspoon ground cloves

5 medium red-skinned cooking apples (such as Rome or Jonathan), cored and halved

½ cup apple juice or apple cider

1 tablespoon lemon juice

⅔ cup sugar-free caramel ice cream topping

½ cup toasted, chopped pecans

In a small bowl, combine cinnamon and cloves. Place ½ of the apple halves in a 4-quart slow cooker. Sprinkle evenly with some of the cinnamon mixture. Add remaining apples and sprinkle with remaining cinnamon mixture. Pour apple juice and lemon juice over apples. Stir to coat apples evenly. Cover and cook for 2 ½ to 3 hours on *LOW*, stirring gently halfway through cooking time. Spoon apples and cooking liquid into individual serving dishes. Drizzle with caramel topping & sprinkle with pecans.

1/10<sup>th</sup> Recipe = 128 calories, 4 g fat, 1 g protein, 25 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 33 mg sodium

## OLD-FASHIONED RICE PUDDING

Nonstick cooking spray

4 cups cooked rice

1 (12 ounce) can evaporated milk

1 cup milk

⅓ cup sugar

¼ cup water

1 cup raisins, dried cranberries and/or dried cherries



3 tablespoons low-fat butter or margarine, softened

1 tablespoon vanilla

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Lightly coat the inside of a 4-quart slow cooker with cooking spray; set aside.

In a large bowl, combine cooked rice, evaporated milk, milk, sugar, and water. Stir in raisins, margarine, vanilla and cinnamon. Transfer mixture to prepared cooker. Cover and cook for 2 to 3 hours on *LOW*. Stir gently before serving.

1/12<sup>th</sup> Recipe = 204 calories, 6 g fat, 4 g protein, 24 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber, 73 mg sodium

## CHOCOLATE CAKE

2 cups white sugar

1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour

¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1 ½ teaspoons baking soda

1 ½ teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

2 eggs

1 cup milk

½ cup vegetable oil

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1 cup boiling water

Spray crock of 6-quart slow cooker with cooking spray. In a medium bowl, whisk the sugar, flour, cocoa, baking soda, baking powder and salt. In a separate small bowl, whisk together the eggs, milk, oil and vanilla until well combined. Whisk in the boiling water. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients; mix well. Pour the cake batter into the prepared slow cooker. Cook on *Low* until cake has no wet spots on top and has pulled away from the sides, about 3 hours. Turn off slow cooker and allow cake to rest for 30 minutes before serving.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 870.779.3609, email [Chaley@uaex.edu](mailto:Chaley@uaex.edu), or visit Room 215 in the Miller County Courthouse, 400 Laurel, Texarkana, AR.

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