

Home on the Range

Crockpot Specialties

Coming home on a cold winter's evening to the inviting smells of beef stew simmering in a crockpot is a welcoming feeling.

Crockpots or slow cookers are great for providing hot meals on a busy day. The Penn State Cooperative Extension warns that it is important to keep safety in mind when using a slow cooker or crockpot.

Because the heat is direct and is combined with steam within a tightly-covered container, the slow cooker does a better job killing disease-causing microbes than does long-time, low-temperature cooking in a conventional oven. Still, precautions must be taken to avoid holding foods in the bacterial danger zone (40- to 140-degrees) too long.

To maximize the safety of the slow cooker:

- Thaw meat or poultry in the refrigerator or microwave oven before placing in the slow cooker. If placed in the slow cooker while still frozen, meat may remain in the danger zone more than three hours.

- Keep perishable foods refrigerated until preparation time. If you cut up meats and vegetables in advance, store them separately in the refrigerator.

- Choose recipes with high moisture content for preparation in your slow cooker. Examples are chili, soup, stew and spaghetti sauce. Cut food in chunks or small pieces to ensure thorough cooking. It's best not to use the slow cooker for large pieces such as roasts or whole chickens because the food will cook so slowly that it could remain in the bacterial danger zone too long.

- Fill the slow cooker no more than two-thirds full. Heat may not adequately penetrate to all parts of the food if the container is too full.

- Keep the lid on securely. Since considerable heat is lost when the cover is lifted, remove the lid only to stir food or check for doneness.

- If possible, set the cooker on the highest setting from the first hour or cooking. This will speed up the heating process. Then, set the control as directed in the recipe. If preparation time is limited, it's safe to cook foods on low for the entire time if the food being cooked has a high moisture content and the slow cooker will heat water on the low setting to 140 degrees in two hours or less.

- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers. Reheat on the range or in a micro-

wave oven, not in the slow heat of a slow cooker.

- If using a slow cooker to keep food warm for a party or buffet, bring the food to a boil on the range and use the slow cooker to keep it hot.

DINNER IN A CROCK-POT

2 pounds ground turkey or beef
1 tablespoon cooking oil
½ cup onion, chopped fine
3 pints cut green beans
2 cups raw potatoes, sliced ½-inch thick
2 cans cream of mushroom soup
1 can cheddar cheese soup
1 teaspoon salt

Brown meat in oil. Put one can of soup in bottom of 4 or 5-quart crock-pot. Add about one-third meat, one-third onion, one-third potatoes, and one-third beans. Add one can soup. Repeat layers and top each with one can soup. Cover and cook on high 4 hours or low 8 hours.

Note: Do not dilute soup. To keep potatoes from becoming discolored while cooking slowly, first toss them in solution of one-half teaspoon cream of tartar and 1 cup water. Drain and add to other ingredients.

SLOPPY JOES

3 pounds ground chuck or hamburger
1 to 2 onions, finely chopped
1 green pepper, seeded and chopped, optional
2 8-ounce cans tomato sauce
¼ cup ketchup
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon chili powder
¼ teaspoon pepper
¼ teaspoon garlic powder

Brown ground meat in skillet; pour into colander and rinse well. Put into crock-pot. Add remaining ingredients. Stir thoroughly. Cover and cook on low 8 to 10 hours or on high for 3 to 4 hours.

Pam Zebley
Northeast, Md.

BARBECUE MEATS

Place uncooked, seasoned, and cut-up chicken, ham, pork chops or rabbit in a crockpot. Pour a little barbecue sauce on each piece. Add no water. Cover and cook on low 8 to 10 hours or high for 4 to 6 hours.

For added flavor, put cooked meat in broiler pan; pour remaining sauce and drippings over top. Place under broiler for 5 to 10 minutes.

Pam Zebley
Northeast, Md.



Stews taste great when slow-cooked in a crock-pot. Try to adapt your favorite stew by following directions for a crock-pot recipe but adapting the seasonings and ingredients to fit your favorite taste.

COUNTRY CHICKEN SOUP

2 onions, chopped
2 to 3 carrots, sliced
2 stalks celery, sliced
2 teaspoons salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
¼ teaspoon basil
¼ teaspoon leaf thyme
3 tablespoons dry parsley flakes
10-ounce package frozen peas, optional

2½ pound whole fryer
4 cups water
1 cup noodles
Place all ingredients in crockpot except noodles in order listed. Cover and cook on low 8 to 10 hours or high for 4 to 6 hours. One hour before serving, remove chicken and cool slightly. Remove meat from bones and return to crockpot. Add noodles. Turn to high. Cover and cook one hour.

Pam Zebley
Northeast, Md.

BAKED HAM IN FOIL

Pour ½ cup water in crockpot. Wrap precooked 3 to 4 pound ham in foil; place in crockpot. Cover and cook on high one hour, then low 6 to 7 hours or until ham is hot. If desired, sprinkle ham with liquid smoke before wrapping in foil.

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Featured Recipe

Thanks to tender American lamb and convenience food, Irish stew has just joined the list of quick and easy meals for today's easy cooks. Stews taste great and are good for us but trying to find the time to cook a hearty stew is a challenge.

There are many shortcuts to make stew easy to prepare and cut cooking and preparation time. Use prepared gravy for thickening. Substitute frozen stew vegetables for the potatoes, carrots, and celery, which will shorten preparation time.

The flavor of the stew will get better each time it is reheated. Make your lamb stew ahead, store in the refrigerator and quickly reheat to receive raves from your family and friends.

QUICK AND EASY LAMB STEW

1 pound lean American lamb, cubed
Non-stick spray coating
2 medium onions, cut in wedges
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tablespoon prepared horseradish
1 tablespoon prepared or brown mustard
1 teaspoon dried thyme, basil, oregano, marjoram, or rosemary, crushed

15 ounces stewed tomatoes, undrained
3 or 4 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed
2 carrots, cut in ½-inch slices
2 stalks celery, cut in ½-inch slices
1½ cups small fresh mushrooms
1 cup frozen peas
12-ounce jar brown gravy

Spray a large saucepan or kettle with non-stick spray. Brown lamb cubes and add onion, garlic, horseradish, and herb; mix well. Stir in tomatoes, cover and simmer 15 minutes.

Add potatoes, carrots, celery, and mushrooms. Cover and cook 15 to 20 minutes or until meat and vegetables are tender. Stir in peas and gravy; heat through.

Serve with a crisp green salad and warm cornbread.

Recipe Topics

If you have recipes for the topics listed below, please share them with us. We welcome your recipes, but ask that you include accurate measurements, a complete list of ingredients and clear instructions with each recipe you submit. Send your recipes to Lou Ann Good, Lancaster Farming, P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522. Recipes should reach our office one week before publishing date.

March 11- Muffin Favorites
18- Barley & Other Grains
25- Lentils, Dried Beans
April 1- Recipes Using Nuts