

★ THE ★
SOUTHERN
SLOW COOKER
BIBLE

★
365 EASY *and* DELICIOUS
DOWN-HOME RECIPES

TAMMY ALGOOD

author of FARM FRESH SOUTHERN COOKING *and* IN A SNAP!

THE
SOUTHERN
SLOW COOKER
BIBLE

365 EASY AND DELICIOUS DOWN-HOME RECIPES




TAMMY ALGOOD



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BOOKS

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*To George, the finest blessing
I have ever received*



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★ INTRODUCTION ★

I grew up thinking everyone had a slow cooker. How else would they prepare a Sunday roast with potatoes and carrots? And what about chili and cheese dip? Those items were regularly being slow cooked on our home kitchen counter. And in a day when there really weren't oodles of kitchen accessories to be found, that self-contained cooker was by far the handiest, most helpful small kitchen appliance available.

And it still is. I like to think of it as wrapping a warm blanket around your dinner ingredients. It swaddles and coddles the food, coaxing out the maximum flavor while keeping the lucky foods inside incredibly moist. In essence, it is cooking efficiency that is beautifully and deliciously done.

It wasn't until I was out of college and trying to squeak out a living in my first job that I began to realize the true value of having a slow cooker. I soon came to the conclusion that it was like having my very own sous chef in the kitchen. While I was away during the day working, it was working on dinner. And since I was on a ridiculously tight budget, the slow cooker helped me transform the inexpensive cuts of meat I had to purchase into succulence that was tablecloth-worthy.

My trusty little kitchen helper has only been elevated in culinary importance since then. It's an appliance that I can say I truly love. While my food budget isn't nearly as tight as it was for me thirty-five years ago, time is what I battle now. And quite frankly, slow cooking translates into easy cooking, which to me means no stress and a totally relaxed stroll to the dining room table.

Many advances have been made in slow-cooker technology since I had my first avocado green one-piece unit back in the early 1980s. How marvelous that there is no longer just one size available. Instead, there are slow cookers that range from miniature to extra large (up to 7 quarts), as well as those that are programmable so you don't even have to be home to turn the appliance off.

In my opinion, everyone needs to own at least one slow cooker. Get to know the wide range of cooking options it creates for you through the recipes in this book and stock your freezer with the leftovers. When you want a dish to have time on its side so that flavors can develop and meld and textures can soften to an almost silky intensity, this is your go-to appliance. So let me introduce you to your new best friend in the kitchen . . . the slow cooker.

★ RECIPE CONVERSION ★

Want to convert a stove-top or oven recipe so that it can be done in the slow cooker instead? No problem! Just look for a similar recipe to be your guide. For instance, if you are used to preparing your grandmother's recipe for vegetable beef soup on the stove, find a slow-cooker version that can be your basis for timing.

Keep in mind that slow cookers don't have the same liquid evaporation rates as Dutch ovens do on the stove or in the oven. The slow cooker is designed to trap liquid inside, so recipes typically use less moisture than conventional recipes. You may need to adjust the amount you use when converting a recipe to be made in the slow cooker. As a

general rule, decrease the liquid by one-third; so if a stovetop recipe calls for 9 cups of liquid, decrease it to 6. If it is an oven recipe that includes little or no liquid, add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of water or stock.

Traditional stovetop recipes frequently use liquid evaporation as a way to thicken the finished dish. Since that doesn't happen with slow-cooked foods, think about thickening the dish with either flour or cornstarch.

As a guide, a recipe that cooks for 45 minutes to an hour in a 350-degree oven will be ready in a slow cooker when prepared on high in 3 to 4 hours or on low in 6 to 8 hours.

★ SLOW COOKER TIPS ★

Don't be surprised if you have family members who gobble up slow-cooked dishes containing ingredients they typically don't like. The beauty of slow cooking is that it tempts and

tantalizes your nose for hours before the food is ready to actually consume. And you increase interest in trying foods when picky eaters help you prepare the dish, so get them in the kitchen to assist with the preparation!

- ★ Always make sure meats are completely cooked in the slow cooker. That means ground beef, pork, sausage, and recipes containing them, such as meatballs, need to reach 160 degrees. Chicken breasts need to reach 170 degrees. For the most accurate results, use an instant-read thermometer to check the internal temperature at the end of your cooking time.
- ★ When a time range is given in a recipe, always check the progress at the first or lowest time listed. Then be prepared to extend the cooking time as needed.
- ★ Fill your slow cooker at least half full, but no more than three-quarters full for the best results.
- ★ Preparation can be done ahead of time. Just fill the slow cooker insert the night before, cover, and refrigerate. If possible, bring it to room temperature 30 minutes ahead of time. If not, just place in the slow-cooker base and cook as directed. You might need to add 30 minutes to the cooking time. Check at the time listed, then add more time if necessary.
- ★ Because slow cookers prepare food

at an even rate and because it's covered, the food stays moist. Just remember that by cutting foods to a uniform size, you promote cooking at a uniform rate. This is especially important for stews that use lots of vegetables as well as bite-size meats.

- ★ The slow cooker is much more energy efficient than an oven and is perfectly safe to leave on all day for cooking. It uses extremely low wattage, so go ahead and let it cook while you are asleep or gone for the day. A bonus is that it doesn't heat up your kitchen like ovens or stoves do.
- ★ Don't worry if the recipe seems to not have enough liquid. Since there is little evaporation, it will be fine. The exception for using more liquid will be if you are cooking dry beans, or if pasta or rice is added, which will absorb liquid as it cooks.
- ★ Most meats benefit from being placed on a bed of vegetables that have been placed on the bottom of the slow cooker or surrounding it. Typically, these vegetables are onions, carrots, mushrooms, or some form of potatoes. You don't have to serve the vegetables with the meat if you have picky eaters,

but they taste terrific and help keep the meat moist.

- ★ If you don't use fresh garlic, 1/2 teaspoon of commercially minced garlic is equal to one clove.
- ★ The lid allows condensation to fall back into the slow cooker, which practically works like a self-baster for the food inside. Most slow cookers have clear lids for peeking at the food bubbling away inside. There is no need to open the lid or to stir thanks to the steady cooking temperature. So resist the urge to lift the lid. If you do, you immediately lower the temperature and thereby increase the cooking time required. For every lifting of the lid, tack on at least an additional 15 minutes of cooking time. Depending on how long you leave the lid off, it may increase the cooking time by up to 30 minutes.
- ★ The "warm" setting on many slow cookers is a terrific way to keep the food ready to serve if you eat in shifts or if you have late guests. If you don't have a warm setting on your slow cooker, turn it off and leave it covered. Then 15 minutes before serving, turn the slow cooker back on low.
- ★ The average temperature of a slow cooker set on low is 200 degrees F and 300 degrees F on high.
- ★ High settings typically cook foods in half the time of those cooked on the low setting. So if you have a recipe that calls for the food to be cooked on high for 4 hours, it will cook on the low setting in 8 hours.
- ★ Seafood is often added at the end of slow cooking to preserve the texture.

The same is true for some dairy products and fresh herbs.

- ★ Don't try to cook frozen meats in the slow cooker. Frozen loose-pack vegetables and fruits are fine, but meats should be thawed first in the refrigerator.
- ★ For the sake of food safety, don't try cooking a whole chicken or turkey in the slow cooker. It simply takes too long to get the meat to a safe cooking temperature due to the density of the bones. Stick with poultry pieces instead.
- ★ Use the slow cooker for cooking purposes only rather than for reheating already cooked leftovers that have been refrigerated.
- ★ For a richer flavor as well as more color, consider searing large cuts of meat or browning them in a skillet before adding them to the slow cooker.
- ★ Some slow cookers come with an insulated carrier that makes transporting food from your kitchen to another location a breeze. Rather than just placing the slow cooker in the carrier, I have found that placing a piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil between the lid and the slow-cooker insert top helps enormously. This works to keep road bumps along the way from becoming spills whether you have a carrier or not. If you don't have a carrier, consider setting the slow cooker inside an insulated cooler. Cushion it with towels to prevent any shifting during driving.
- ★ I love slow cookers that have elastic bands included for transportation purposes. This band hooks

underneath the handle, goes over the lid, and attaches underneath the other handle. It keeps the lid secure with hardly any effort at all. If your slow cooker doesn't have one, find a large band to fashion your own system. Just test it out before you have the slow cooker warm and full of food.

- ★ Temperature extremes can cause the ceramic insert of the slow cooker to crack. Never freeze foods in the insert or use it on the stovetop as you would a Dutch oven. With that type of scenario in mind, don't put cold water

in a hot slow-cooker insert. Let it cool at least 30 minutes before soaking it for cleanup.

- ★ If your slow cooker is an older model and doesn't have a removable insert, use a hot, soapy sponge to clean the inside since it cannot be immersed in water. Slow-cooker liners make cleanup a snap, particularly for these types of cookers.
- ★ Regular salt can be substituted in any recipe calling for garlic salt, onion salt, or seasoned salt.





APPLES



Orchard Fresh Apple Butter
Cranberry Apple Sauce
Warm Apple Breakfast Cereal
Hot Butterscotch Apple Cider
Pecan-Stuffed Apples
Down-Home Fried Apples
Vanilla Apples
Apple Spiced Wine
Butter Pecan Caramel Apple Crisp
Apple Slow-Down Brown Betty
Fresh Apple Pork Chops
Apple and Parsnip Cream of Potato Soup
Good Granny Apple Raisin Crumble

Orchard Fresh Apple Butter

The best apples for making this recipe are those that fall apart easily rather than those that hold their shape when cooked. So select the apples listed or a combination of these for the best results.

Yield: 6 cups

4 1/2 pounds McIntosh, Empire, and/or Cortland apples, cored, peeled, and sliced
 2/3 cup apple cider or apple juice
 2 cups white sugar
 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
 1/8 teaspoon ground cloves

Place the apples, cider, white sugar, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour, then reduce the heat to low and cook for 10 hours. Stir occasionally. Uncover and whisk briskly to break up any apple chunks. Check the thickness. If you desire a thicker butter, cover and cook an additional hour. If you want a thinner butter, stir in no more than 2 tablespoons of additional cider. Ladle into hot canning jars and place at least a finger-width apart on a wire rack. Cool to room temperature. When completely cool, refrigerate until ready to use.

Cranberry Apple Sauce

Traditional apple sauce doesn't contain spices. Instead, it is a cooked mixture of slightly sweetened apples and juice. In this

case, I couldn't resist throwing in some fresh cranberries that begin hitting the supermarket shelves in abundance in October.

Yield: 4 1/2 cups

3 pounds McIntosh, Empire, and/or Cortland apples, cored, peeled, and cut in large chunks
 1 cup apple cider or apple juice
 1 cup fresh cranberries
 1/4 cup sugar

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the apples, cider, cranberries, and sugar. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Using a potato masher, crush the mixture to the desired consistency. Serve warm or at room temperature.

NOTE: Refrigerate leftovers and use within 1 week.

Warm Apple Breakfast Cereal

Want to get your family up and at it on a weekend morning? Then start this aromatic twist on hot cereal just before you stagger off to bed. No alarm required! These apple varieties were selected because they hold their shape when cooked. If you want the apples to fall apart, select McIntosh.

Yield: 6 servings

8 Granny Smith, Braeburn, and/or Golden Delicious apples, cored, peeled, and quartered
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 3 tablespoons sorghum syrup or honey
 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
 2 1/2 cups granola cereal
 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 1/3 cup toasted chopped pecans
 Plain or vanilla nonfat yogurt



Warm Apple Breakfast Cereal
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Place the apples in a lightly greased medium slow cooker and toss with the lemon juice to evenly coat. Drizzle with the sorghum and sprinkle with the cinnamon. Top with the cereal and drizzle with the butter. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Spoon into warm cereal bowls and top with the pecans and a dollop of yogurt. Serve immediately.

Hot Butterscotch Apple Cider

Head to the supermarket ice-cream topping aisle for the butterscotch sauce, and select apple cider rather than apple juice for the most apple flavor.

Yield: 8 servings

1/2 gallon apple cider
1/3 cup butterscotch sauce
8 long cinnamon sticks

Place the cider and butterscotch sauce in a small or medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Serve warm with cinnamon sticks.

VARIATION: Substitute 2 cups of butterscotch schnapps for the butterscotch sauce.

Pecan-Stuffed Apples

This fall combination can hardly be beat, and the small scoops of vanilla ice cream added at serving time are a delicious complement to the apples.

Yield: 6 servings

1/3 cup apple cider or apple juice
2 teaspoons apple brandy or additional apple cider
6 Rome Beauty, Jonagold, and/or Golden Delicious apples
1/2 cup toasted chopped pecans
1/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/4 cup golden raisins
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
Vanilla ice cream

Place the cider and brandy in a lightly greased large slow cooker and set aside. Core the apples from the top to halfway down the apple. Using a melon baller, scoop out some of the inside to allow plenty of room for the stuffing. Dice the scooped-out apple pulp and add to a medium bowl, along with the pecans, brown sugar, raisins, butter, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Mix well and carefully spoon into the apples. Transfer to the slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours or on high for 1 1/2 hours.

To serve, place each apple on a serving dish and spoon some of the cooking liquid on top. Serve each with one scoop of ice cream. Serve immediately.

NOTE: Save any leftover sauce for topping ice cream later. Just refrigerate and use within 1 week.



Pecan-Stuffed Apples preparation



Pecan-Stuffed Apples
(page 4)

Down-Home Fried Apples

Serve this down-home delight as a side dish with turkey or pork, or over waffles, pancakes, pound cake, or ice cream. An apple corer and slicer make preparing this dish easy.

Yield: 8 servings

1/2 cup apple cider or apple juice
 5 Gala, Rome Beauty, or Golden Delicious apples,
 cored, peeled, and sliced
 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
 1/8 teaspoon ground allspice

Place the cider and apples in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a small bowl stir together the brown sugar, cinnamon, vanilla, lemon juice, nutmeg, and allspice. Sprinkle evenly over the apples. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours or on high for 1 1/2 hours. Serve warm.

Vanilla Apples

Poaching cored apples allows all the goodness inside to intensify. The fragrant touch of vanilla will charm you! These apple varieties hold their shape well when cooked.

Yield: 6 servings

6 Rome Beauty, Stayman, or Jonathan apples
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 3 cups hot water
 1 1/2 cups sugar
 1 vanilla bean, split
 1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
 Freshly whipped cream for garnish

Core the apples, leaving the fruit intact, and drizzle the inside of the apples with the lemon juice. Set aside.

Place the water, sugar, vanilla bean, and vanilla in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Stir until the sugar dissolves. Place the apples with the cut end down in the water. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours or until the apples are easily pierced with a knife. Remove and discard the vanilla bean. Serve warm with drizzles of the cooking liquid and a garnish of freshly whipped cream.

Apple Spiced Wine

This warm party drink is made for fall and winter gatherings. In addition to being perfect with nibbles, I like it after dinner when sitting around the outdoor fireplace.

Yield: 10 servings

2 (750 milliliter) bottles dry red wine
 3 Granny Smith apples, peeled and sliced
 1/2 cup apple brandy
 1/2 cup sugar
 1 teaspoon lemon juice
 2 cinnamon sticks, broken in half
 2 whole cloves

Stir together the wine, apples, brandy, sugar, and lemon juice in a medium slow cooker. Tie the cinnamon sticks and cloves in a piece of cheesecloth or in a spice bag. Add to the wine mixture, cover, and cook on low for 2 hours. Remove and discard the spice bag and serve warm.

NOTE: You can remove the apples before serving or serve them separately if desired.

Butter Pecan Caramel Apple Crisp

With very little fuss, this dessert begins to bubble away in the slow cooker to make the end of your meal dramatic. Use store-bought shortbread cookies or homemade leftovers. Ginger snaps would be yummy too.

Yield: 4 servings

- 1/4 cup apple cider or apple juice
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 5 Golden Delicious or Granny Smith apples, cored, peeled, and sliced
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Dash of ground nutmeg
- 1/3 cup caramel sauce
- 4 shortbread cookies, crushed
- 4 toasted pecan halves

In a small bowl whisk together the cider and cornstarch until smooth. Transfer to a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Add the apples, pecans, brown sugar, butter, lemon juice, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Stir to combine, cover, and cook on low for 3 hours or on high for 1 1/2 hours.

To serve, scoop the warm apple mixture into serving bowls and drizzle evenly with the caramel sauce. Top each serving with a crushed cookie and pecan half.

Apple Slow-Down Brown Betty

A Brown Betty is usually an apple dessert that is baked with buttered bread crumbs. I have substituted peaches before, but always go back to apples, which seem to work best. Traditionally, it is served with whipped cream, but I like it with vanilla ice cream.

Yield: 6 servings

- 6 large Braeburn or Granny Smith apples, cored, peeled, and sliced
- 3 cups very coarse bread crumbs or small bread cubes, toasted
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- Vanilla ice cream

Place the apples in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a large bowl gently toss together the bread crumbs, butter, white sugar, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Evenly spread over the apple slices. Cover and cook on low for 3 to 4 hours. Uncover and let stand for 15 minutes before serving warm with scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Fresh Apple Pork Chops

Every fall we purchase really thick-cut pork chops that are packaged and frozen for later use. But before those hit the freezer, a pack is thawed and goes into the slow cooker for this feast. I like serving it with green beans and homemade rolls.

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) bag baby carrots
- 4 (1-inch thick) pork chops
- 1 ½ cups apple juice
- ⅓ cup white wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 large apples, cored and cut in wedges

Place the carrots in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Top with the pork chops. In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the apple juice, vinegar, mustard, paprika, garlic salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Shake to emulsify and pour over the pork chops. Cover and cook on high for 2 hours. Add the apples, cover, and continue cooking another 2 hours. Serve warm.

Save the cooking liquid as stock for soups and stews later on. Just cool, transfer to a freezer container, label, and freeze. Use within 2 months.

Apple and Parsnip Cream of Potato Soup

This is yet another one of those “keep an open mind” soups that is nothing less than

fantastic. Creamy white sweet parsnips pair with tart apples in a soup that is fresh and equally good served either hot or cold.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 pound (4 medium) Braeburn, Crispin, and/or Mutsu apples, cored, peeled, and diced
- 1 pound parsnips, peeled and sliced
- 2 baking potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 cups apple juice
- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar
- ½ teaspoon onion salt
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup half-and-half, room temperature
- Fresh minced thyme

Place the apples, parsnips, potatoes, apple juice, stock, vinegar, onion salt, onion powder, and pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Stir in the half-and-half, cover, and cook for 30 minutes longer. Serve with a sprinkling of fresh thyme.

Good Granny Apple Raisin Crumble

Tart Granny Smith apples get cozy with brown sugar and spices while golden raisins plump up and soften. Get the whipped cream ready!

Yield: 8 servings

- 4 large (2 pounds) Granny Smith apples, cored and cut in wedges
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided

★
Fresh Apple Pork Chops
(page 8)



Apples

1 cup firmly packed brown sugar, divided
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons baking mix, divided
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1/2 cup rolled or old-fashioned oats
1/2 cup chopped pecans
Whipped cream for garnish

Place the apples and raisins in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Sprinkle with the vanilla and dot with 2 tablespoons of the butter. In a medium bowl stir together 2/3 cup of the brown sugar, 2 tablespoons of the baking mix, and the cinnamon. Sprinkle over the apple mixture and toss gently to evenly coat.

In the same bowl combine the remaining 1/3 cup of brown sugar and 1 cup of baking mix with the oats. With a pastry blender or two forks, cut in the remaining 3 tablespoons of butter until the mixture resembles coarse meal. Sprinkle over the apple mixture and top with the pecans. Fold a clean kitchen tea towel in half and lay over the top of the slow cooker, allowing the excess to hang over the outside. Cover and cook on high for 2 hours. Uncover and let stand for 15 minutes before serving warm with a garnish of whipped cream.

BEANS



Black Bean and Pork Stew
As Southern as It Gets Pinto Bean Soup
Stock Market Baked Beans
Easiest Baked Beans Ever
Garlic-Infused White Kidney Beans
Five Beans Meet in a Slow Cooker
Beans and Bacon
Holiday Green Bean Casserole
Almond Green Bean Casserole
Lima Bean Buttermilk Soup
No Meat but Still Messy Sloppy Joes
Black Bean Tomato Soup
Kentucky Bourbon Baked Beans
Garbanzo Bean and Spinach Soup
Chow Down Corn and Bean Chowder

Black Bean and Pork Stew

For the best results, use a dark, hearty beer for this recipe. You will love the intensity it adds to this easy cold-weather dish.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) package dry black beans
- 1 ½ pounds boneless pork shoulder butt roast
- 2 (12-ounce) bottles dark beer or 3 cups low-sodium beef stock
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 ½ teaspoons garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup sour cream
- 2 Roma tomatoes, chopped
- Fresh cilantro leaves for garnish

Place the beans in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Place the pork on top of the beans and add the beer, red peppers, jalapeños, garlic salt, cumin, and black pepper. Cover and cook on high for 4 hours. Using two forks, pull apart the pork. Serve warm with a dollop of sour cream, a sprinkling of the tomatoes, and a garnish of fresh cilantro on each serving.

VARIATIONS: Add one peeled and chopped sweet onion when you add the other ingredients, if desired. Or you can substitute shredded Monterey Jack cheese for the sour cream.

As Southern as It Gets Pinto Bean Soup

Pinto beans have been a constant on Southern lunch and dinner tables for decades. This one is a twist on the usual cooked beans, but still should be served with wedges of hot buttered cornbread.

Yield: 6 servings

- 2 cups dry pinto beans
- 5 ½ cups water, divided
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 (14.5-ounce) diced tomatoes, undrained
- Shredded Monterey Jack cheese for garnish
- Sliced green onion tops for garnish

Place the beans and 5 cups of the water in a Dutch oven over high heat. Bring to a boil and immediately reduce the heat to medium-low. Simmer uncovered for 10 minutes and remove from the heat. Cover and let stand for 1 hour. Drain and rinse the beans, then transfer to a lightly greased medium slow cooker.

Add the remaining ½ cup of water, stock, cumin, onion powder, garlic powder, black pepper, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 4 ½ hours or until the beans are tender. Stir in the tomatoes and their juices, cover, and cook for 30 minutes longer. Serve warm with a garnish of cheese and green onions.



Black Bean and Pork Stew
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Stock Market Baked Beans

A variety of dried beans should be in everyone's pantry. They cost literally pennies on the dollar, have an indefinite shelf life, and can become the best friend of your slow cooker. This recipe gently rehydrates the beans and then finishes the cooking with a tangy sauce.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) package dry navy beans
- 3 cups vegetable stock
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup ketchup
- ½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons sorghum syrup or honey
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon onion salt
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 bacon slices, chopped

Place the beans, stock, and water in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. In a medium bowl whisk together the ketchup, brown sugar, vinegar, sorghum, mustard, Worcestershire, onion salt, garlic powder, and pepper. Stir into the beans and sprinkle the bacon on top. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours. Uncover and cook for 30 minutes longer, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened. Serve warm.

Easiest Baked Beans Ever

Not only is this recipe extra simple, it is a great way to keep the beans warm when serving things buffet style. Use the barbecue sauce of

your choice to make these as spicy or mild as you like.

Yield: 10 servings

- 3 (15-ounce) cans pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup prepared barbecue sauce
- ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 slices bacon, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ⅛ teaspoon black pepper

Place the beans, barbecue sauce, brown sugar, bacon, onion powder, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker and mix well. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours or on high for 2 ½ hours. Serve warm.

Garlic-Infused White Kidney Beans

The simple addition of garlic to a slow-cooked dish makes the usually harsh cloves mellow. This recipe isn't strongly flavored, but it's perfectly balanced so it can be served with everything from grilled meat to a vegetable dinner.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) package dry white kidney beans or cannellini beans
- 8 cups vegetable stock
- 8 garlic cloves, peeled
- 1 sprig fresh sage
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Place the beans in a lightly greased large slow cooker and add the stock, garlic, sage,

seasoned salt, and white pepper. Cover and cook on high for 3 hours and 15 minutes. Using a large slotted spoon, transfer the beans to a serving dish, discarding the sage and garlic. Sprinkle with the black pepper and drizzle with the olive oil. Serve warm.

Five Beans Meet in a Slow Cooker

This mixture of all things bean is perfect to serve with grilled chicken or pork. It sings next to coleslaw, so consider that as an additional side dish. By the way, I managed to get even kids to eat this!

Yield: 10 servings

- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 orange or yellow bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 (16-ounce) can red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15.25-ounce) can lima beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can cannellini or white kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 ½ cups ketchup
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ½ cup prepared Italian salad dressing
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, combine the green peppers, orange peppers, celery, kidney beans, Northern beans, lima beans, black beans, cannellini beans, and bay leaves.

In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the ketchup, water, brown sugar, salad dressing, vinegar, mustard, onion powder, and pepper. Shake well to emulsify. Pour over the bean mixture. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Remove and discard the bay leaves and serve warm.

VARIATION: Omit the onion powder and add one small sweet onion, peeled and chopped.

Beans and Bacon

Bacon is marvelous when married to beans. It lends a smoky flavor that is punctuated by the sweetness from the brown sugar and sorghum. Pack this up for serving a crowd at your summer barbecue or upcoming potluck.

Yield: 12 servings

- 1 pound bacon, chopped
- 2 (15-ounce) cans pork and beans
- 2 (16-ounce) cans red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 (15-ounce) cans pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ½ cup cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sorghum syrup or maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard

In a large skillet over medium heat, cook the bacon until crisp, around 5 to 6 minutes. Transfer with a slotted spoon to paper towels to drain. Place the pork and beans, kidney beans, and pinto beans in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Stir in the brown sugar, vinegar, sorghum, garlic powder, mustard, and bacon. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Serve warm.

Holiday Green Bean Casserole

What would any holiday meal be without this classic? I sometimes substitute English peas for the green beans during Easter, but for every other holiday, this is it.

Yield: 10 servings

- 2 (16-ounce) packages frozen French-style green beans, thawed
- 1 (10-ounce) container refrigerated Alfredo sauce
- 1 (8-ounce) can diced water chestnuts, drained
- 1 (6-ounce) jar sliced mushrooms, drained
- 1 (2-ounce) jar diced pimientos, drained
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 (6-ounce) can French-fried onions, divided
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped pecans

In a large bowl stir together the beans, Alfredo sauce, water chestnuts, mushrooms, pimientos, Parmesan, pepper, and a third of the onions. Transfer to a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 1/2 hours. Five minutes before serving, place the remaining onions and the pecans in a small, dry skillet over medium-low heat. Cook, stirring frequently, for 2 minutes. Evenly sprinkle over the casserole just before serving.

Almond Green Bean Casserole

In honor of my friend Bryan who doesn't particularly care for onions, I give you a holiday green bean casserole with no onions. Crunchy slivered almonds take the place of fried onions, making this a healthier option as well.

Yield: 6 servings

- 2 (10-ounce) packages frozen green beans, thawed
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup

- 2 tablespoons chopped roasted red peppers
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2/3 cup slivered almonds, toasted

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the beans, soup, red peppers, parsley, salt, black pepper, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 3 1/2 hours. Sprinkle evenly with the almonds and cook uncovered for 10 minutes longer. Serve warm.

Lima Bean Buttermilk Soup

I grow lima beans every year in my garden, and it always seems to take forever for them to get ready to harvest. When I do finally have a mess shelled, this is the soup I like to make. I love the zip it gets from zesty buttermilk.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 4 cups fresh lima beans
- 4 cups vegetable stock
- 1 1/2 cups buttermilk
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- Bacon bits for garnish

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the onions and cook for 6 minutes, stirring frequently.

Meanwhile, place the beans, stock, buttermilk, garlic salt, and pepper in a lightly greased medium to large slow cooker. Add the onions and pan drippings. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. If desired, crush part of the beans with a potato masher. Serve warm with a garnish of bacon bits.

VARIATION: Stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of finely shredded Swiss cheese to the soup just before serving.

No Meat but Still Messy Sloppy Joes

You will hardly miss the meat in this vegetarian version of a kid-friendly favorite. It is loaded with flavor and just as fun to eat as the traditional recipe.

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 large green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 (16-ounce) can dark red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon prepared mustard
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
- 4 hamburger buns, toasted

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the green peppers, beans, tomato sauce, ketchup, mustard, chili powder, hot sauce, garlic powder, and black pepper. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours. Serve warm on toasted buns.

VARIATION: Add one small peeled and chopped sweet onion to the slow cooker.

Black Bean Tomato Soup

I always have cans of black beans in my pantry because they are so versatile. I love the slightly sweet flavor and the creamy interior. This dinner soup is remarkably healthy, and

I usually serve it with a sprinkling of tortilla strips in addition to the sour cream.

Yield: 6 servings

- 2 (15-ounce) cans black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 (4.5-ounce) cans chopped green chilies
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can stewed tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (11-ounce) can shoepeg or whole kernel corn, drained
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water or dry white wine
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cumin
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon paprika
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh parsley
- Sour cream for garnish

Place the beans, chilies, diced and stewed tomatoes and their juices, corn, water, chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, pepper, and paprika in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 5 hours. Stir in the parsley and serve in warm soup bowls with a garnish of sour cream.

VARIATION: Add one peeled and chopped sweet onion to the slow cooker.

Kentucky Bourbon Baked Beans

I have a favorite Kentucky bourbon that I use in this recipe, and many people notice something but aren't quite sure what it is. These beans have depth, and they are terrific with burgers, hot dogs, or barbecued chicken.

Yield: 10 servings

- 4 (16-ounce) cans baked beans
- 1 (12-ounce) jar chili sauce

1/2 cup bourbon
1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon sorghum syrup
1 teaspoon dry mustard

Place the beans, chili sauce, bourbon, brown sugar, sorghum, and mustard in a lightly greased small or medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 2 hours. Uncover and cook for 30 minutes longer. Serve warm.

Garbanzo Bean and Spinach Soup

Garbanzo beans (chickpeas) are for more than just making hummus. They hold their shape extremely well in this fresh soup that has just a hint of heat on the back end. Check out the variation option of adding pasta, which will make the soup more kid friendly.

Yield: 6 servings

1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
6 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
2 (15-ounce) cans garbanzo beans (chickpeas), drained and rinsed
1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
1 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 (16-ounce) package fresh baby spinach
Shaved Parmesan cheese for garnish

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, place the onions, garlic, stock, beans, tomatoes and their juices, basil, cumin, salt, red pepper flakes, and black pepper. Cover

and cook on low for 6 hours. Add the spinach, cover, and cook 1 hour longer. Serve warm with a garnish of shaved Parmesan.

VARIATION: Add 1/2 cup of ditalini or alphabet pasta to the soup 30 minutes before serving.

Chow Down Corn and Bean Chowder

This terrific chowder is loaded with unexpected flavor. If you don't have kidney beans on hand, feel free to substitute others. It would do well with pinto beans, Northern beans, baby lima beans, or garbanzo beans.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

1 (1 to 1 1/4 pound) butternut squash, peeled and diced
1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 large red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
1 (16-ounce) can light red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
1 (15.25-ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained and rinsed
1 (32-ounce) container low-sodium chicken stock
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon paprika
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 cup half-and-half, room temperature
1/4 cup fresh basil strips to garnish

Place the squash, onions, bell peppers, beans, and corn in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the stock and sprinkle with the oregano, cumin, paprika, garlic salt, and pepper. Cover and cook on high 4 hours or on low for 8 hours. Stir in the half-and-half and serve warm with a garnish of the basil strips.



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BEEF



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Southern Barbecued Meatballs

You will never purchase commercially prepared frozen meatballs again when you see how easy these are to enjoy. You can change the cheese to your liking and even vary the meat. Instead of ground beef, use ground pork or a mixture of ground chicken, Italian sausage, or turkey.

Yield: 6 servings

2 pounds ground beef
1 egg
½ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
⅓ cup finely chopped onions
¼ cup dry seasoned bread crumbs
2 cups ketchup
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Place the beef, egg, cheese, onions, and bread crumbs in a large bowl. Mix with your hands until well blended. Using a 1 ½ -inch melon baller, scoop the meat mixture into balls and place into a lightly greased small slow cooker.

In a medium bowl whisk together the ketchup, mustard, brown sugar, vinegar, lemon juice, Worcestershire, and cayenne. Pour over the meatballs. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours. Serve warm.

Hearty Beef and Barley Soup

I have been sneaking pearl barley into soups for years and my husband doesn't know it . . .

until now! It's terrific in this hearty soup. I always serve it with wedges of flatbread. By the way, kids think the pearl barley is pasta, so keep the secret!

Yield: 8 servings

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 ½ pounds beef stew meat
1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
3 celery stalks, chopped
3 carrots, peeled and sliced
1 small sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 small green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
4 cups low-sodium beef stock
2 cups water
1 cup canned spaghetti sauce
⅔ cup medium pearl barley
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon dried basil
½ teaspoon black pepper

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the beef and brown for 2 minutes, turning to evenly sear.

Place the tomatoes and their juices, celery, carrots, onions, green peppers, stock, water, spaghetti sauce, barley, parsley, garlic salt, basil, and black pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the browned beef. Cover and cook on low for 9 hours or until the meat is tender. Serve warm.

Kid's Choice Sloppy Joes

Yes, it's messy to eat, but worth the cleanup necessary for fingers, faces, and perhaps clothing. This kid-pleasing classic is exceptional and really makes mealtime fun.

Yield: 12 servings

2 pounds ground beef
1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
2 cups ketchup
2 (1-ounce) envelopes sloppy joe seasoning mix
½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 teaspoon prepared mustard
12 hamburger buns, toasted

In a large skillet over medium heat, cook the ground beef until no pink remains, around 10 minutes. With a spatula, break apart the meat as it cooks. Meanwhile, place the green peppers, ketchup, sloppy joe mix, brown sugar, and mustard in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Drain the beef and add it to the slow cooker, stirring to combine. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Serve warm on toasted hamburger buns.

Country Beef and Sweet Onion Stew

This is a make-ahead dish I've been preparing for years. It freezes beautifully, so it's a great recipe to prepare when you have a lazy day at home. I like to serve it with crusty bread slathered with pats of softened butter.

Yield: 5 to 6 servings

8 fresh thyme sprigs
1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium chicken stock
1 cup apple juice
4 carrots, peeled and cut in ¼-inch slices
2 yellow onions, peeled and thinly sliced
2 pounds beef stew meat
½ teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
Fresh parsley for garnish

Tie the thyme sprigs together with kitchen twine and place in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the stock, juice, carrots, and onions. Place the stew meat on top and sprinkle with the garlic salt, pepper, and flour. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 4 ½ hours. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh parsley.

Spring Garden Beef Stroganoff

A spring harvest of early onions and carrots gives this dish a lift while the creamy sauce enlivens ordinary cooked noodles. This slow-cooker version eliminates the need to purchase higher-priced beef cuts.

Yield: 6 servings

1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
12 baby carrots
3 pounds top round beef, cut in strips
1 (8-ounce) package mushrooms, sliced
1 ⅓ cups low-sodium beef stock, divided
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon dried thyme
½ teaspoon black pepper
½ teaspoon paprika
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 cup sour cream, room temperature
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
Hot cooked noodles (1 16-ounce package)

Place the onions and carrots in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Top with the beef, mushrooms, 1 cup of the stock, and the Worcestershire. In a small bowl whisk together the remaining stock

and cornstarch until smooth. Pour over the beef and sprinkle with the garlic salt, thyme, black pepper, paprika, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours.

Remove 1 cup of the liquid and stir in the sour cream until smooth. Add back into the slow cooker and increase the heat to high. Cook uncovered for 15 minutes longer. Serve over hot noodles with a sprinkle of the parsley on each serving.

VARIATION: Substitute 2 pounds of diced chicken for the beef and replace the beef stock with low-sodium chicken stock.

Pulled Beef Brisket

Briskets always require long, slow cooking to tenderize the cut. This recipe lets you get creative with how you serve it. Nestle it inside warm buns for sandwiches or serve it piled high with lots of sauce. Either way will be a family winner!

Yield: 12 servings

1 (4- to 5-pound) beef brisket, cut in half
 1 ½ cups water or 1 (12-ounce) beer
 ½ cup Worcestershire sauce
 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
 1 ½ teaspoons beef bouillon granules
 1 ½ teaspoons chili powder
 1 teaspoon dry mustard
 ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
 ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
 ¼ teaspoon onion salt
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 ½ cup ketchup
 2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
 1 teaspoon honey
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
 ½ teaspoon hot sauce

Place the beef in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a medium bowl whisk together the water, Worcestershire, vinegar, bouillon, chili powder, mustard, cayenne, garlic powder, onion salt, and black pepper. Measure out ½ cup of the mixture, cover, and refrigerate. Pour the remaining mixture over the beef. Cover and cook on low for 9 hours or until the meat is tender.

Twenty minutes before the beef is ready, combine the ketchup, brown sugar, honey, butter, hot sauce, and the reserved cooking liquid in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat to low. Simmer uncovered for 3 minutes.

Skim the fat from the cooking juices and shred the meat with two forks. Serve warm with the barbecue sauce on the side.

HINT: If you want to serve this in sandwich form, run the split buns under the broiler, but brush them first with a thin spread of mayonnaise.

Sunday Dinner Roast Beef

Mashed potatoes have a best friend in this savory meat. The gravy for both only takes a few minutes to prepare from the drippings. You'll love the marriage!

Yield: 6 servings

1 (4-pound) boneless chuck roast, trimmed and cut in half
 1 large yellow onion, peeled and chopped
 1 ⅓ cups plus 3 tablespoons water, divided
 1 (10.5-ounce) can condensed French onion soup
 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 ½ cup Worcestershire sauce
 ¼ cup cider vinegar
 6 garlic cloves, peeled and minced

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1/4 teaspoon black pepper
3 tablespoons cornstarch

Place the roast in a lightly greased large slow cooker and surround it with the onions. In a medium bowl whisk together 1 1/3 cups of the water with the soup, brown sugar, Worcestershire, vinegar, garlic, and pepper. Pour over the roast, cover, and cook on low for 8 hours.

Remove the meat and place on a large cutting board. Cover with aluminum foil to keep warm. Skim the fat from the cooking liquid and pour into a small saucepan over high heat. In a small bowl whisk together the remaining 3 tablespoons of water and cornstarch until smooth. When the cooking liquid comes to a boil, gradually whisk in the cornstarch mixture. Cook and stir constantly for 2 minutes or until thickened. Meanwhile, slice the meat and transfer to a serving platter. Serve the warm gravy with the sliced meat.

Gator Pot Roast

You'll flip over the terrific zing this beef roast gets from just a few ingredients from our Southern-most friends. Serve it with fresh cooked lima beans and hot dinner rolls.

Yield: 10 servings

1 (3 1/2-pound) boneless beef top round roast, cut in half
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon seasoned salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1 (8-ounce) can sliced pineapple, undrained
1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/2 cup low-sodium beef stock

1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

Place the roast halves in a lightly greased large slow cooker and sprinkle evenly with the flour, seasoned salt, and pepper. Drain the pineapple, reserving the juice. Refrigerate the pineapple. Add the sugar and cornstarch to the reserved juice and whisk until smooth. Add the stock, soy sauce, and garlic powder. Pour over the beef, cover, and cook on low for 7 hours. Place the pineapple slices over the top, cover, and cook for 1 more hour. Remove the beef to a cutting board with a liquid moat. Loosely cover with aluminum foil and let stand for 10 minutes. Slice and serve warm with the cooking juices and pineapple slices.

Barbecued Beef Brisket

Not all barbecue has to be pulled or shredded. This tasty recipe is served in thin slices, making it great for sandwiches or next to a mound of coleslaw!

Yield: 6 servings

1 large sweet onion, peeled and sliced
1/4 cup low-sodium beef stock or dark beer
3 tablespoons chili sauce
1 tablespoon canned beef bouillon base
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1 (3-pound) beef brisket, trimmed

Lightly grease a large slow cooker and scatter the onions over the bottom. In a

small bowl whisk together the stock and chili sauce. Pour over the onions.

In a separate small bowl combine the bouillon base, Worcestershire, chili powder, cumin, pepper, and garlic powder. Rub all over the beef and place in the slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 5 hours or until the meat is tender. Uncover and let stand in the juices for 20 minutes.

Remove the brisket and place on a cutting board with a liquid moat. Cut across the grain into thin slices. Serve warm with the cooking juices on the side.

West Memphis Beef Brisket

This is a potluck pleaser that will feed a crowd. It can be served as it comes out of the slow cooker or you can add any type of sauce you like to the final presentation. Plan ahead for this one because it greatly benefits from marinating overnight in the refrigerator. Leftovers freeze well.

Yield: 12 servings

1 (5- to 6-pound) beef brisket
2 bay leaves
½ cup low-sodium beef stock
3 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon liquid smoke
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon black pepper

Place the brisket and bay leaves in a large lightly greased slow cooker. In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the stock, Worcestershire, chili powder, liquid smoke, garlic salt, and pepper. Shake to emulsify and pour over the beef. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight.

Cook on low for 8 hours or until the meat is tender. Place the beef on a cutting board with a liquid moat and cover with aluminum foil. Let meat rest for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, strain the cooking liquid into a gravy boat and discard the solids. Thinly slice the brisket across the grain and serve warm with drizzles of the cooking juices.

We've Got Company Beef Tips and Egg Noodles

This recipe is company worthy and certainly family friendly. It is an economical way to enjoy protein-rich beef. Just add a green side salad and the meal is complete.

Yield: 8 servings

2 ½ pounds lean beef tips
2 (10.75-ounce) cans condensed cream of mushroom soup
1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of celery soup
2 cups baby carrots
½ teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
1 (16-ounce) package wide egg noodles

Place the beef in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a large bowl stir together the mushroom soup, celery soup, carrots, garlic salt, and pepper. Pour over the beef. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. During the last 20 minutes of cooking, prepare the noodles according to the package directions. Serve the beef tips over the warm noodles.

VARIATION: Substitute an equal amount of chopped skinless boneless chicken for the beef tips.

Wine-Braised Short Ribs

Some recipes for ribs will require your attention over a grill all day. This one is equally delicious and only requires 5 minutes of your time. So as you take care of duties around the house, you've got dinner under control. It only needs thick slices of Texas toast to sop up the extra juices.

Yield: 4 servings

4 1/2 pounds beef short ribs
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 2 cups dry red wine
 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 (8-ounce) package sliced button mushrooms
 5 garlic cloves, peeled
 6 fresh Italian parsley sprigs
 1 bay leaf

Place the ribs in a lightly greased large slow cooker and sprinkle evenly with the salt and pepper. Add the wine, tomatoes and their juices, mushrooms, garlic, parsley, and bay leaf. Cover and cook on low for 8 to 9 hours. Remove and discard the parsley sprigs and bay leaf before serving warm with the cooking juices for dipping.

Beer-Braised Short Ribs

Short ribs are cut from the chuck and are quite tough. But thanks to the slow cooker, they are transformed to a tender, moist meat meal.

Yield: 4 servings

2 sweet onions, peeled and cut in thin wedges
 4 pounds beef short ribs
 1 bay leaf

1 (12-ounce) bottle beer or 1 1/2 cups low-sodium beef stock
 2 tablespoons tomato paste
 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
 2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
 2 teaspoons beef bouillon granules
 2 teaspoons dried thyme
 1 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Place the onions in the bottom of a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Top with the ribs and bay leaf. In a medium bowl whisk together the beer, tomato paste, mustard, brown sugar, bouillon granules, thyme, garlic salt, and pepper. Pour over the ribs. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or until the meat is tender. Remove and discard the bay leaf and serve warm.

Old-Fashioned Meatloaf

Other than french fries, meatloaf is the best accent for ketchup. I adore the leftovers on toasted bread smeared with mayonnaise.

Yield: 8 servings

2 pounds ground beef
 1 small sweet onion, peeled and diced
 1 small green bell pepper, seeded and diced
 1/2 cup plain dry bread crumbs
 1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons cocktail sauce, divided
 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
 2 tablespoons milk or half-and-half
 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 Ketchup



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In a large bowl gently stir together the beef, onions, green peppers, bread crumbs, 1/4 cup of the cocktail sauce, parsley, Worcestershire, milk, garlic salt, and black pepper. Set aside.

Place a large piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil into a large oval slow cooker. Press into the bottom and up the sides, allowing the excess to hang over the sides. Transfer the meat mixture to the slow cooker and form into a loaf. Spoon the remaining 3 tablespoons of cocktail sauce over the top. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 3 hours. Test with an instant-read thermometer to make sure the temperature has reached 160 degrees F.

To serve, gently lift out of the slow cooker, using the aluminum foil excess as handles. Let rest for 10 minutes before slicing with a serrated knife and serving warm with drizzles of ketchup.

I'll Be Around Steak and Mushrooms

My husband loves meat, and although we frequently have all-vegetable meals, he can't go long without his meat fix. This recipe is one that I go back to over and over thanks to his requests!

Yield: 6 servings

1 pound sliced mushrooms
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1 (2-pound) top round steak, cut in 1 1/2-inch strips
1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
1/4 cup low-sodium beef stock or dry red wine

1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon dried parsley
1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
Hot cooked rice or egg noodles

Put the mushrooms in the bottom of a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Place the flour, garlic salt, and pepper in a large heavy-duty zip-top bag. Add the beef strips and shake to evenly coat. Lay on top of the mushrooms.

In a medium bowl whisk together the soup, stock, onion powder, oregano, parsley, and thyme. Pour around the beef. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Serve over hot cooked rice.

Precious Memories Vegetable Beef Soup

Who doesn't have a childhood memory of this sensational soup combination? It's as comforting as can be on a chilly winter night.

Yield: 6 servings

1 pound ground beef
1 small sweet onion, peeled and chopped
6 carrots, peeled and sliced
2 celery stalks, sliced
1 small turnip, peeled and diced
1/2 pound sliced mushrooms
1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium beef stock
1 (12-ounce) bottle beer or 1 1/2 cups additional low-sodium beef stock
1 1/4 cups water
1 teaspoon seasoned salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 bay leaf
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/8 teaspoon ground allspice

Place the beef and onions in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook for 5 minutes, or until the meat is no longer pink, breaking the meat into pieces with the spatula as it cooks. Drain and add to a lightly greased large slow cooker.

Add the carrots, celery, turnips, mushrooms, stock, beer, water, seasoned salt, pepper, bay leaf, garlic powder, and allspice to the slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Remove and discard the bay leaf and serve warm.

VARIATION: If desired, stir in 2 cups of chopped cabbage during the last 30 minutes of cooking.

Barbecued Roasted Beef Sandwiches

My husband never gets tired of barbecue in any form. That's why I keep an armload of recipes handy so I can barbecue nearly any cut of meat. This one happens to be the favorite of ours, and I got the recipe from my mother's recipe collection.

Yield: 12 servings

- 1 (4-pound) boneless chuck roast, trimmed and cut in half
- 1 ½ cups ketchup
- 1 small sweet onion, peeled and finely chopped
- ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon celery seeds
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch

- 2 tablespoons cold water
- 12 hamburger buns

Place the roast halves in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a medium bowl whisk together the ketchup, onions, brown sugar, vinegar, mustard, Worcestershire, garlic salt, paprika, pepper, and celery seeds. Pour over the meat. Cover and cook on low for 9 hours or until the meat is tender. Transfer the meat to a large platter.

Strain the cooking juices into a heavy saucepan over high heat and return the meat to the slow cooker. Cover to keep warm. In a small bowl whisk together the cornstarch and water. When the juices come to a boil, gradually stir in the cornstarch mixture. Stir constantly until the juices return to a boil. Cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes.

Shred the meat with two forks and add the sauce. Preheat the broiler on high and place the split hamburger buns on a baking sheet. Toast the buns for 1 minute or until lightly browned. Top with the meat mixture and serve immediately.

Cola Brisket

We grew up with six-ounce bottles of cola in the refrigerator. The anticipation was nearly overwhelming at times. Those bottles were ice-cold treats for Saturday afternoons when our chores were done. Now that treat helps keep a beef brisket moist and full of flavor.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

- 1 large sweet onion, peeled and cut in thin wedges
- 1 (3 ½-pound) beef brisket, trimmed and cut in half
- 1 cup cola

1 cup chili sauce
1/4 cup dry onion soup mix

Place the onions in a lightly greased large slow cooker and top with the brisket. In a medium bowl whisk together the cola, chili sauce, and soup mix. Pour over the brisket. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours or until the meat is tender. Shred with two forks and serve warm.

Your Grandmother's Pot Roast

Perhaps this recipe was the first one you made when you started using a slow cooker. It's still the best and just needs a pan of brown-and-serve dinner rolls for scooping up the excess gravy.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

1 (4-pound) boneless chuck or rib roast, trimmed
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
6 carrots, peeled and cut in large pieces
4 potatoes, peeled and quartered
1 sweet onion, peeled and sliced
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 bay leaf
8 button mushrooms, sliced

Place the roast in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Sprinkle with the flour, garlic salt, and pepper. Surround the meat with the carrots, potatoes, onions, celery, and bay

leaf. Spread the mushrooms evenly across the top. Cover and cook on low for 10 to 11 hours. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Serve warm.

Pecan Chipped Beef Dip

My friend Melinda gave me this recipe many years ago, and I have adapted it to fit my slow-cooker way of life. It is easy, delicious, and can be served straight from the cooker.

Yield: 6 servings

1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, cubed
1 (2.25-ounce) jar dried beef, finely chopped
1/2 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
1/2 cup toasted chopped pecans, divided
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
1/4 teaspoon onion powder
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
Assorted crackers

In a lightly greased small slow cooker, place the cream cheese, beef, Monterey Jack cheese, 1/4 cup of the pecans, mayonnaise, onion powder, garlic powder, and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Stir well and reduce the heat to warm. Sprinkle the remaining 1/4 cup of pecans over the top and serve with assorted crackers.

VARIATION: Substitute sour cream for the mayonnaise.

BERRIES



Blueberry Buttermilk Cobbler

Blueberry Oatmeal

Make-Ahead Cranberry Sauce

Triple Berry Dessert Sauce

Frozen Blackberry Cobbler

Mixed Berry Cobbler

Cranberry Baked Brie

Good on Anything Strawberry Sauce

Strawberry Rhubarb Cobbler

Blackberry Cobbler

Cranberry Apples on the Side



Blueberry Buttermilk Cobbler
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Blueberry Buttermilk Cobbler

Blueberries are so simple to freeze, which is why I always have a supply available. This recipe works just as well with fresh berries as it does with frozen. Don't thaw the frozen berries if you choose to use those.

Yield: 6 servings

5 cups blueberries
 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 2 tablespoons plus 3/4 cup all-purpose flour, divided
 1 lemon
 3/4 cup self-rising cornmeal
 1/3 cup white sugar
 1 egg
 2/3 cup buttermilk
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 Vanilla ice cream

Place the blueberries in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Sprinkle with the brown sugar and 2 tablespoons of the flour. Grate the zest from half of the lemon and squeeze 2 tablespoons of the juice onto the blueberries. Toss gently to combine.

In a medium bowl whisk together the remaining 3/4 cup of flour, cornmeal, and white sugar. Make a well in the center and



Blueberry Buttermilk Cobbler preparation

add the egg, buttermilk, and butter. Stir until just mixed and drop spoonfuls of the batter onto the blueberry mixture. Cover and cook on high for 3 1/2 hours. Turn off the heat and uncover. Let stand for 1 hour before serving warm with scoops of vanilla ice cream.

NOTE: To freeze blueberries, simply place them unwashed on a jellyroll pan and put in the freezer. When the berries are frozen (about 2 hours), transfer to a labeled and dated heavy-duty freezer container. Quickly wash the frozen berries when you are ready to use them and drain well in a colander before adding to recipes.

Blueberry Oatmeal

Nutrient-rich blueberries are nestled in a healthy bed of warm, cooked oats. A drizzle of half-and-half or cream over the top makes it seem a bit indulgent and gets the whole family nourished for a busy day.

Yield: 10 servings

6 1/2 cups water
 1 1/2 cups rolled or old-fashioned oats
 1 cup slivered almonds
 3 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
 1/2 teaspoon pure almond extract
 1/8 teaspoon salt
 1 pint fresh blueberries
 1/4 cup half-and-half

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the water, oats, almonds, brown sugar, butter, almond extract, and salt. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours. Stir in the blueberries and serve with a garnishing drizzle of the half-and-half.

Make-Ahead Cranberry Sauce

If there is ever a time to make smart use of do-ahead recipes, it's during the holidays when those last-minute preparations can make the cook manic. This recipe freezes well, so an extra batch made at Thanksgiving can come to your rescue in December.

Yield: 5 1/2 cups

2 (12-ounce) packages fresh cranberries
 1 cup white sugar
 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 1 cup orange juice
 1/2 cup water
 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
 1 cup dried cranberries
 1/2 cup chopped pecans
 1 tablespoon orange zest

Place the fresh cranberries in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a medium bowl stir together the white sugar, brown sugar, orange juice, water, and ginger. Pour over the cranberries, cover, and cook on high for 3 to 3 1/2 hours.

Uncover and cook 30 additional minutes, then turn off the slow cooker. Stir in the dried cranberries, pecans, and zest. Allow the cranberry mixture to cool to room temperature, stirring every 45 minutes. When cool, cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Triple Berry Dessert Sauce

I love the convenience of frozen mixed berries, and this is a great way to utilize any you have frozen from the previous summer. Try this silky smooth sauce over toasted slices

of pound cake or angel food cake or as an ice-cream topping.

Yield: 12 servings

7 cups frozen mixed berries (blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries work best)
 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 2 tablespoons plus 1/3 cup water, divided
 2 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca

Place the berries in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover with the brown sugar. In a small bowl combine 2 tablespoons of the water with the tapioca. Pour over the fruit. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Add the remaining 1/3 cup of water and, using an immersion blender, puree until smooth. Serve warm.

NOTE: Leftovers should be refrigerated and used within 2 weeks. If you do not have an immersion blender, cool the fruit mixture to room temperature, then puree in a blender.

Frozen Blackberry Cobbler

I tend to gobble up fresh blackberries as fast as I purchase them. That means I have to use frozen berries when the fresh ones are out of season. But this cobbler is terrific with those totally chilled, unthawed fruits!

Yield: 6 servings

5 cups frozen blackberries
 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 1 1/2 tablespoons cornstarch
 1 1/2 cups self-rising flour
 1/4 cup white sugar
 2/3 cup buttermilk

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
Vanilla ice cream

Place the blackberries in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Sprinkle with the brown sugar and cornstarch. Toss very gently to evenly coat.

In a medium bowl whisk together the flour and white sugar. Make a well in the center and add the buttermilk and butter. Stir until just combined and drop spoonfuls of the batter over the blackberries. Cover and cook on high for 3 1/2 hours. Turn off the heat and uncover. Let stand for 1 hour before serving warm with scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Mixed Berry Cobbler

You've probably already got berries in your freezer for smoothie making. Why not turn those into a warm, luscious dessert for dinner tonight?

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

2 (16-ounce) packages frozen mixed berries
(strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, and raspberries)
1 cup pomegranate or blueberry blended juice
1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 teaspoon pure almond extract
1 (18.25-ounce) package yellow cake mix
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut in pieces

Place the berries in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a small bowl whisk together the juice, cornstarch, and almond extract. Pour over the berries. Sprinkle the cake mix evenly over the top and dot with the butter.

Fold a clean kitchen tea towel in half and place over the top of the slow cooker, allowing the excess to hang over the sides. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours. Turn off the heat, uncover, and remove the towel. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving warm.

Cranberry Baked Brie

Brie is such an elegant cheese, and cranberries make this beautifully festive. Use a large pancake spatula for removing the finished product from the slow cooker. Using a medium or large slow cooker makes it easier to remove as well.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (13.2-ounce) wheel of brie
1/4 cup dried cranberries
2 tablespoons finely chopped pecans
1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
Assorted crackers

Place the brie in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. In a small bowl stir together the cranberries, pecans, and brown sugar. Place on top of the brie wheel, mounding as necessary. Cover and cook on low for 3 1/2 hours. With a large spatula, transfer the brie to a platter. Serve warm with assorted crackers.



Good on Anything Strawberry Sauce

I love picking strawberries. Who can resist being outside in the spring? Not me, and I typically pick much more than I need. This sauce is good on anything from roasted pork to pancakes to ice cream. You'll find dozens of reasons to use it up and make more!

Yield: 3 cups

2 pounds ripe strawberries, hulled
1 cup sugar
1/4 cup white grape juice or lemon juice
2 teaspoons cornstarch

Place the strawberries in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Coarsely crush the berries with a potato masher. Stir in the sugar and blend well. In a small bowl whisk together the juice and cornstarch until smooth. Stir into the strawberries and blend well. Cover and cook on low for 2 to 3 hours. Uncover and cook for 30 minutes longer if you want a thicker sauce. Use immediately or cool to room temperature. Refrigerate leftovers and use within three days.

Strawberry Rhubarb Cobbler

The pairing of fresh strawberries and rhubarb is natural since they arrive on the market about the same time. And this cobbler is proof that they belong together, along with generous scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

3 cups sliced rhubarb
3 cups sliced strawberries
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar, divided
2 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 egg
1/4 cup half-and-half or milk
Vanilla ice cream

Place the rhubarb, strawberries, 1/2 cup of the sugar, and the tapioca in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Stir to blend and thoroughly coat the fruit.

In a medium bowl combine the remaining 2 tablespoons of sugar, flour, baking powder, and salt. Cut the butter into the flour mixture with a pastry blender or two forks until the mixture is crumbly. Stir in the egg and half-and-half just until the dough is moist. Drop tablespoons of the dough on top of the fruit. Fold a clean kitchen tea towel in half and place over the top of the slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 1 1/2 hours. Uncover and let stand for 30 minutes. Serve warm with scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Blackberry Cobbler

There are few fruits that could top this cobbler concoction. And while I love freshly whipped cream, this begs for vanilla ice cream. The mix of cold with the piping hot cobbler is a beautiful and delicious thing!

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

2 pounds fresh blackberries or 2 (16-ounce) bags frozen blackberries (no need to thaw)
1 cup sugar, divided
2 ³/₄ cups baking mix, divided
¹/₂ cup milk
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
Vanilla ice cream

Place the blackberries in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Toss the berries with ¹/₂ cup of the sugar and ¹/₂ cup of the baking mix. Set aside.

In a medium bowl stir together ¹/₄ cup of the sugar, the remaining 2 ¹/₄ cups of baking mix, milk, and butter. Drop spoonfuls of the dough on top of the berries. Sprinkle the top with the remaining ¹/₄ cup sugar. Cover and cook on high for 3 to 3 ¹/₂ hours. Uncover and let stand for 15 minutes. Serve warm with scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Cranberry Apples on the Side

This combination came to me via my friend Bryan and it's marvelous. Since I keep cranberries in my freezer, it's a year-round recipe rather than just when fresh berries are available at the market. Use it as an unexpected side dish.

Yield: 8 servings

3 cups Braeburn, Rome, or Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and diced
2 cups fresh or frozen cranberries (if frozen, no need to thaw)
1 cup plus 1 tablespoon white sugar, divided
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 ¹/₄ cups baking mix
¹/₃ cup firmly packed brown sugar
¹/₂ cup half-and-half
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
¹/₂ teaspoon ground cinnamon

Place the apples, cranberries, 1 cup of the white sugar, and the flour in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Toss well to evenly coat and set aside.

In a medium bowl stir together the baking mix, brown sugar, half-and-half, and butter. Drop by tablespoons onto the apple-cranberry mixture. Mix the remaining 1 tablespoon of white sugar with the cinnamon and sprinkle evenly over the top. Cover and cook on high for 3 to 3 ¹/₂ hours. Uncover and let stand for at least 30 minutes before serving warm.

BROCCOLI AND CAULIFLOWER



Cauliflower Bisque

Broccoli Beer Cheese Soup

Broccoli Cheese Casserole

Turn It Tender Beef and Broccoli

One-Dish Broccoli and Brown Rice Casserole

Pecan Broccoli

No-Cheese Broccoli Soup

Cauliflower Buttermilk Soup

Cauliflower Bisque

Cauliflower is an upscale member of the cabbage family. This soup will earn raves even from those who think they don't enjoy this cruciferous vegetable. Kids will think you are serving them potato soup!

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

- 1 pound cauliflower florets
- 1 pound baking potatoes, peeled and cut in large dice
- 1 small sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans low-sodium chicken stock
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 2 green onions, chopped

Place the cauliflower, potatoes, onions, stock, thyme, garlic salt, black pepper, and cayenne in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours. With an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Add the half-and-half and butter, stirring until well blended. Serve warm with a garnish of cheese and green onions.

Broccoli Beer Cheese Soup

Instant mashed potatoes have been thickening soups for years in many kitchens. This recipe uses it too, and you'll love the creamy consistency it has.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (20-ounce) package frozen cut broccoli, thawed
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup beer
- 1 large shallot, peeled and chopped
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 7 ounces processed American cheese loaf, cubed
- 1 1/2 cups instant mashed potatoes

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, stir together the broccoli, stock, milk, beer, shallots, and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours or on high for 3 hours. Stir in the cheese cubes with a whisk until the cheese melts. Add the mashed potatoes and continue whisking until well combined, about 2 minutes longer. Serve warm.

VARIATIONS: Omit the beer and substitute another cup of chicken stock or some low-sodium beef stock.

Instead of using the processed American cheese loaf, use a combination of shredded Gruyere and Jarlsberg cheeses.

Broccoli Cheese Casserole

This might just be the easiest way to show your family how much they really like broccoli. It worked for me!

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) package frozen chopped broccoli
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed Cheddar cheese soup
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 1 large shallot, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 3/4 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce



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Cauliflower Bisque
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¼ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon paprika
1 cup crushed buttery crackers
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the broccoli, soup, milk, shallots, cheese, Worcestershire, pepper, and paprika. Sprinkle with the cracker crumbs. Drizzle with the butter. Cover the insert top with a folded clean kitchen towel, allowing the excess to hang over the edges. Cover and cook on high for 3 hours. Uncover and let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Turn It Tender Beef and Broccoli

Chuck steak is another one of those inexpensive beef cuts that benefits greatly from low, slow cooking to “turn it tender,” as my grandmother used to say. It’s easier to slice the raw meat if you place it in the freezer for fifteen minutes.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

2 pounds boneless chuck steak, cut into thin strips
1 (10.5-ounce) can beef consommé
½ cup oyster sauce*
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 (16-ounce) bag fresh broccoli florets
Hot cooked rice

Place the beef in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Add the consommé and oyster sauce. Cover and cook on high for 3 hours. Place the cornstarch in a small bowl. Remove 2 tablespoons of the cooking liquid and stir into the cornstarch until smooth. Stir the cornstarch mixture and broccoli

into the beef mixture. Cover and cook an additional 15 minutes. Uncover and gently toss. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving warm over hot cooked rice.

* Oyster sauce is a thick concentration of oysters, brine, and soy sauce.

One-Dish Broccoli and Brown Rice Casserole

I love rice with broccoli, and this dish becomes a complete meal with the addition of turkey. You can substitute chicken or ham for the turkey if you wish.

Yield: 6 servings

1 ½ cups uncooked brown rice
1 ½ pounds turkey tenderloin, cut in large dice
2 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese, divided
1 (16-ounce) bag frozen broccoli
3 carrots, peeled and sliced
1 leek, chopped
2 (10.75-ounce) cans condensed cream of mushroom soup
½ teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon white pepper
½ teaspoon dried thyme
¼ teaspoon paprika
1 ½ cups low-sodium chicken stock

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, layer the rice, turkey, 1 cup of the cheese, broccoli, carrots, and leeks. In a medium bowl whisk together the soup, garlic salt, white pepper, thyme, and paprika. Spread over the layered mixture and top with the remaining 1 cup of cheese. Pour the stock around the edges of the ingredients and do not stir. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours. Stir and serve warm.

Pecan Broccoli

This light side dish is a great accompaniment to just about any meat. I particularly like it with grilled fish because the lemony flavor is nice with both.

Yield: 8 servings

2 (16-ounce) packages frozen broccoli florets
1 cup pecan halves, toasted
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons olive oil
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper

Place the broccoli, pecans, and garlic in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Drizzle with the lemon juice and oil and sprinkle evenly with the salt and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours (longer if you like the broccoli softer). Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute cauliflower for the broccoli florets.

No-Cheese Broccoli Soup

This soup is so good it doesn't require handfuls of cheese to enrich it. Instead, it counts on milk, flour, and butter to do the trick. Warm bread and a small side salad are all that's needed to finish the meal.

Yield: 8 servings

4 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 small sweet onion, peeled and chopped
6 tablespoons all-purpose flour
½ cup low-sodium vegetable stock or dry white wine
2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
2 cups milk
4 cups (1 ½ pounds) chopped fresh broccoli
3 carrots, peeled and finely chopped
2 celery stalks, finely chopped
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
1 teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon paprika
Salad croutons for garnish

Place the butter and oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the onions and sauté for 4 minutes. Stir in the flour to form a smooth paste and gradually add the vegetable stock. Cook for 2 minutes longer until thickened.

Pour the chicken stock and milk into a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Stir in the onion mixture until smooth. Add the broccoli, carrots, celery, parsley, garlic salt, pepper, and paprika. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours. Serve warm with a garnish of salad croutons.

Cauliflower Buttermilk Soup

Buttermilk gives this soup just the right amount of tang, and the slow cooker gives it a nice low-cooking time frame to prevent curdling. Serve it with buttery homemade salad croutons.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

1 (16-ounce) package cauliflower florets
1 baking potato, peeled and finely chopped
4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1 bay leaf
½ teaspoon onion powder
½ teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon dried thyme
¼ teaspoon black pepper
⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 cups buttermilk, room temperature
Salad croutons for garnish
Freshly snipped chives for garnish

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, place the cauliflower, potatoes, stock, bay leaf, onion powder, garlic salt, thyme, black pepper, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours or until the cauliflower is tender. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Using an immersion blender, puree the mixture until smooth. Stir in the buttermilk and increase the slow cooker heat to high. Cover and cook for 30 minutes longer. Serve in warm soup bowls with a garnish of croutons and chives.

CABBAGE



Unstuffed Cabbage Stew
Cider-Braised Cabbage
Green Cabbage and Beef Soup
Warm Coleslaw Chicken
Cabbage Patch Brisket
Peasant Stew
Coleslaw and Pasta Soup



★
Cider-Braised Cabbage
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Unstuffed Cabbage Stew

Cabbage has such a different flavor when cooked versus enjoying it raw. This recipe deconstructs tedious cabbage rolls to give you the identical flavor without the hassle.

Yield: 8 servings

1 pound ground beef
 2 shallots, peeled and chopped
 1 cup uncooked rice
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon seasoned salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
 1 (24-ounce) jar spaghetti sauce
 2 (10.75-ounce) cans condensed tomato soup
 1 cup water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sugar
 1 medium head cabbage, chopped
 Parsley leaves for garnish

Place the ground beef and shallots in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook for 5 minutes or until no pink remains, breaking apart the meat with a spatula as it cooks. Drain and stir in the rice, seasoned salt, and pepper. Set aside.

In a large bowl combine the spaghetti sauce, soup, water, and sugar. Place one-third of the sauce on the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Top with a third of the beef mixture and a third of the cabbage. Repeat the layers, cover, and cook on low for 7 hours. Serve warm garnished with parsley.

Cider-Braised Cabbage

A slow cooker is perfect for braising vegetables because it has both necessary attributes: a tight-fitting lid and a long, slow

cooking time. This recipe begs to be served with grilled smoked sausages.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

2 teaspoons vegetable or canola oil
 2 medium purple onions, peeled and cut in wedges
 1 teaspoon caraway seeds
 8 cups thinly sliced red cabbage
 1 cup apple cider or apple juice
 2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the onions and sauté for 3 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the caraway seeds and cook 1 minute longer.

Place the cabbage in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Pour the onion mixture over the cabbage and toss gently. In a small bowl whisk together the cider, brown sugar, garlic salt, and pepper until smooth. Pour over the cabbage mixture and toss to evenly coat. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours or on high for 2 hours. Serve warm.

Green Cabbage and Beef Soup

Even those who don't appreciate cabbage under other conditions will fall for this soup. The cabbage rounds out all the flavors and becomes almost like noodles.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

1 pound ground beef
 5 cups (1 small head) thinly sliced green cabbage
 1 leek, chopped
 1 (16-ounce) can light red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
 1 (15-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, undrained

- 1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium beef stock
- 1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Place the beef in a large skillet over medium heat and cook for 5 minutes or until no pink remains, breaking apart the meat with a spatula as it cooks. Drain and add to a medium slow cooker. Stir in the cabbage, leeks, beans, crushed tomatoes and their juices, stock, diced tomatoes and green chilies and their juices, garlic salt, cumin, and pepper. Cover and cook on high for 5 to 6 hours. Serve warm.

Warm Coleslaw Chicken

This has all the charm of cold coleslaw, but it cooks to tender perfection on top of economical chicken thighs. I like this chicken cut because it's just the right portion size.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 tablespoon vegetable or canola oil
- 6 skinless, bone-in chicken thighs
- 1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 1/2 cups chopped green cabbage
- 1 1/2 cups chopped baby carrots
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle the chicken evenly with the seasoned salt and pepper. Add to the hot skillet and brown for 3 minutes on each side.

Transfer to a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Top with the cabbage and carrots.

In a small bowl whisk together the garlic, stock, and tomato paste. Pour over the carrots. Cover and cook on low for 5 to 6 hours or on high for 3 hours or until the juices run clear when the chicken is pierced with a fork. Serve warm.

Cabbage Patch Brisket

Brisket comes from the breast section, underneath the first five ribs. It loves slow cooking and gets remarkable flavor from fresh cabbage.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 (3-pound) boneless beef brisket
- 1 small head fresh cabbage, cut in thin wedges
- 1 sweet onion, peeled and cut in thin wedges
- 4 carrots, peeled and cut in 4 large pieces
- 2 (10.75-ounce) cans condensed cream of celery soup
- 1 cup low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon caraway seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Place the brisket in a large lightly greased slow cooker. Surround it with the cabbage, onions, and carrots. In a large bowl whisk together the soup, stock, Worcestershire, caraway seeds, garlic salt, and pepper. Pour over the brisket. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or until the meat is fork-tender. Use two forks to shred and serve warm.



Peasant Stew

Just because a meal is inexpensive to make doesn't mean it's not tasty. This stew is a good example of that. It has the added bonus that it freezes well if you happen to have leftovers.

Yield: 12 to 14 servings

1 (16-ounce) package smoked sausage, sliced
 4 carrots, peeled and sliced
 2 celery stalks, chopped
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 1 bay leaf
 4 (14.5-ounce) cans low-sodium vegetable stock
 1 (15.5-ounce) can great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
 1 cup finely shredded cabbage
 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 Shaved Parmesan cheese for garnish

Place the sausages, carrots, celery, onions, bay leaf, stock, and beans in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Add the cabbage, thyme, and pepper, cover, and cook for another 1 to 2 hours. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Serve warm with shavings of Parmesan on top of each filled bowl.

VARIATION: For a spicier stew substitute andouille sausage for the smoked sausage.

Coleslaw and Pasta Soup

This is one of my all-time favorite soups and you simply must try it. It underlines for me that I am in love with my slow cooker. Leave the word *coleslaw* out of the title if you want to coax it into the mouths of your kids . . . then tell them after their second helping!

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

2 cups shredded cabbage
 1 (16-ounce) package smoked sausage, sliced
 2 (14.5-ounce) cans diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 (10.5-ounce) can condensed French onion soup
 3 cups water or low-sodium vegetable stock
 1 cup lima beans or green beans
 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 1 (9-ounce) package refrigerated cheese-filled tortellini
 Shredded Parmesan cheese for garnish

Place the coleslaw, sausages, tomatoes and their juices, soup, water, beans, and cayenne in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 4 hours. Add the tortellini, cover, and cook for 15 minutes longer. Ladle into warm soup bowls and garnish with shredded Parmesan.

CAJUN/ CREOLE



Big Easy Red Beans and Rice

Cajun Sausage and Shrimp

Simmer-Down Jambalaya

Andouille Sausage Gumbo

Creole Hot Dogs

Shrimp Creole

Jumbo Gumbo

Crawfish Etouffee

Cajun Smoked Sausage and Bean Stew

Cajun Seafood Macaroni and Cheese

New Orleans Roast Beef Po' Boys

Big Easy Red Beans and Rice

Let the aromas of this Cajun concoction permeate your kitchen and you'll have no problem getting the family to the dinner table. It's your typical slow-cooker recipe that helps you take it easy in the evening.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (16-ounce) package dried red beans
 7 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 3 celery stalks, chopped
 1 pound andouille sausage, sliced thin
 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 3 tablespoons Cajun seasoning
 1 bay leaf
 Hot cooked rice
 Hot sauce
 Sliced green onion tops for garnish

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, place the beans, stock, green peppers, onions, celery, sausages, garlic, Cajun seasoning, and bay leaf. Cover and cook on high for 7 hours or until the beans are tender, stirring occasionally. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Adjust the seasonings if necessary. Serve warm over rice with hot sauce and a garnish of green onion tops.

VARIATIONS: Add a meaty ham bone to the mixture. After cooking, use tongs to remove the bone and place on a platter to cool slightly. When cool enough to handle, remove the meat from the bones and discard the bone. Return the meat to the slow cooker and stir well. Serve as above.

Add a teaspoon of liquid smoke to the slow

cooker after the other ingredients have blended for a bit more depth of flavor.

Cajun Sausage and Shrimp

I love spice and always need extra hot sauce when I serve this salute to Louisiana. I like the healthy addition of brown rice that can be stirred into the dish or used as a holder for the slow-cooked specialty.

Yield: 6 servings

1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 1 large green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 3 celery stalks, sliced
 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 4 spicy fully cooked chicken sausages, sliced
 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 (10-ounce) package frozen whole kernel corn, thawed
 1 cup low-sodium chicken stock
 2 teaspoons Cajun seasoning
 1 pound peeled and deveined large shrimp
 3 cups cooked brown rice
 1 tablespoon tomato paste
 1 tablespoon hot sauce

Coat a large slow cooker with cooking spray. Add the onions, green peppers, celery, garlic, sausages, tomatoes and their juices, corn, stock, and seasoning. Stir to combine. Cover and cook on low for 7 1/2 hours or on high for 5 1/2 hours. Stir in the shrimp, rice, tomato paste, and hot sauce. Cover and cook for 6 minutes longer or until the shrimp are thoroughly cooked. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute andouille sausage for the chicken sausage.

Simmer-Down Jambalaya

Get those rice bowls ready because spicy jambalaya is coming to the table. If you haven't tried chicken sausage, this recipe lets you ease into it beautifully.

Yield: 10 servings

1 pound smoked sausage, halved and cut in 1/2-inch slices
 1 pound chicken sausage, halved and cut in 1/2-inch slices
 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 3 celery stalks, chopped
 2 medium green bell peppers, seeded and chopped
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium chicken stock
 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 2 teaspoons Creole or Cajun seasoning
 1 teaspoon hot sauce
 1 1/2 teaspoons garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 1/2 pound medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
 Hot cooked rice
 Hot sauce

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, stir together the smoked sausages, chicken sausages, garlic, celery, green peppers, onions, stock, tomatoes and their juices, Creole seasoning, hot sauce, garlic salt, black pepper, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 4 1/2 hours. Stir in the shrimp, cover, and cook an additional 15 minutes. Serve over hot rice with additional hot sauce.

Andouille Sausage Gumbo

This recipe was given to me by one of my Louisiana pals years ago. It uses spicy andouille sausage, which is a common addition in anything Creole or Cajun. If you can't locate it in your area, substitute smoked sausage and consider increasing the spices. The characteristic roux is browned in the oven rather than on top of the stove.

Yield: 6 servings

1/2 cup all-purpose flour
 1 tablespoon canola or vegetable oil
 3 pounds andouille sausage, sliced
 1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 large green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 3 celery stalks, chopped
 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 3 bay leaves
 2 1/2 teaspoons Creole seasoning
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 4 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 6 green onions, green tops only, sliced
 Hot sauce

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Place the flour in a dry cast-iron skillet and bake for 12 minutes or until lightly browned. Stir halfway through the cooking time.

Meanwhile, pour the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the sausages and cook, stirring frequently, for 6 minutes. Meanwhile, in a lightly greased large slow cooker, place the onions, garlic, green peppers, celery, tomatoes and their juices, bay leaves, Creole seasoning, black pepper, and cayenne. Add the sausages to the slow cooker and stir to combine.

Place the stock in a large bowl and whisk in the browned flour. Add to the slow cooker mixture and stir well. Cover and cook on high for 5 hours. Stir in the green onion tops, cover, and cook for 10 minutes longer. Remove and discard the bay leaves and serve warm with hot sauce.

Creole Hot Dogs

Leave it to Louisiana to give us bun-worthy Italian sausages with a Southern flair! The mixed peppers make a great topping for these summer sizzlers.

Yield: 12 servings

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 12 Italian sausages
- 1 small red bell pepper, seeded and julienned
- 1 small orange bell pepper, seeded and julienned
- 1 small yellow bell pepper, seeded and julienned
- 1 large sweet onion, peeled and sliced
- 1 ½ cups low-sodium beef stock or 1 (12-ounce) bottle beer
- 2 teaspoons Creole seasoning
- 12 hot dog buns
- 4 tablespoons mayonnaise

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sausages in batches and brown on all sides, about 3 minutes total. Place the bell peppers and onions in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the browned sausages, along with the stock and Creole seasoning. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours or until sausages are done. Smear each hot dog bun with mayonnaise. Add a sausage and top with the vegetables. Serve immediately.

Shrimp Creole

I always have shrimp in my freezer because I adore this crustacean. Here, the shrimp get a tomato bath before being piled high on fluffy hot rice.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 shallot, peeled and chopped
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 (8-ounce) bottles clam juice
- 1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon onion salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 ½ pounds frozen shrimp, shelled and deveined
- Hot cooked rice

In a medium skillet over medium heat, melt the butter and add the shallots. Cook for 3 minutes and sprinkle with the flour. Stir until well blended and add to a lightly greased medium slow cooker along with the clam juice, tomato paste, green peppers, celery, garlic, bay leaf, onion salt, black pepper, sugar, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Add the shrimp, cover, and cook 1 hour longer on low heat. Remove and discard the bay leaf and serve hot over cooked rice.

Jumbo Gumbo

This is a recipe for a crowd, or if you want to freeze leftovers to have ready for busy weeknight dinners. It comes from my parents' next-door neighbor Barbara, who expertly cooks it on the stovetop. I have changed it to cook low and slow instead. The seafood gets added during the last part of cooking.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

3 tablespoons unsalted butter
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 4 celery stalks, chopped
 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 3 cups cooked cubed chicken
 1 pound andouille sausage, sliced
 2 (14.5-ounce) cans diced tomatoes, undrained
 2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 ¾ cup sliced fresh or frozen okra (if frozen, no need to thaw)
 ½ cup tomato juice
 2 bay leaves
 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
 1 teaspoon garlic salt
 ½ teaspoon dried thyme leaves
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 ¼ teaspoon hot sauce
 1 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined
 ½ pound crawfish tails
 Hot cooked rice

Place the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onions, green peppers, and celery. Cook for 4 minutes and sprinkle with the flour. Cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes longer. Transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker.

Stir in the chicken, sausages, tomatoes and their juices, stock, okra, tomato juice,

bay leaves, Worcestershire, garlic salt, thyme, pepper, and hot sauce. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. During the last 30 minutes of cooking, stir in the shrimp and crawfish and cover. Remove and discard the bay leaves. Serve over hot cooked rice with extra hot sauce, if desired.

Crawfish Etouffee

I adore crawfish, so this Cajun-inspired dish is a favorite. If you want, feel free to substitute shrimp for the crawfish. It is always served over hot rice.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

1 tablespoon unsalted butter
 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 2 celery stalks, chopped
 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 small jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
 3 (14.5-ounce) cans diced tomatoes, undrained
 3 tablespoons tomato paste
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon dried oregano
 ¼ teaspoon dried thyme
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
 1 pound crawfish tails
 1 tablespoon cold water
 2 teaspoons cornstarch
 Hot cooked rice
 Hot sauce

Place the butter and oil in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Turn the heat to high, and when the butter is melted, add the onions,

celery, green peppers, garlic, and jalapeño. Let cook uncovered for 30 minutes. Add the tomatoes and their juices, tomato paste, salt, oregano, thyme, black pepper, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours.

Stir in the crawfish, cover, and increase the heat to high. In a small bowl combine the water and cornstarch. Stir until smooth and add to the slow cooker after 15 minutes. Cover and cook for 5 minutes longer. Serve warm over hot rice with additional hot sauce.

Cajun Smoked Sausage and Bean Stew

Find yourself a good Cajun seasoning blend and you'll find tons of uses for the sassy mixture. It's boldly flavored and adds a distinct characteristic to this stew.

Yield: 10 servings

1 pound andouille sausage or hot smoked sausage, cut in 1/2-inch slices
1 celery stalk, diced
1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 orange or yellow bell pepper, seeded and chopped
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 (48-ounce) container low-sodium chicken stock
2 (15.5-ounce) cans cannellini or white kidney beans, drained and rinsed
1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
1 teaspoon Cajun seasoning
1 teaspoon hot sauce
1 (10-ounce) package baby spinach
Shaved Parmesan cheese for garnish

Place the sausages, celery, onions, orange peppers, and garlic in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Pour the stock

over the top and add the beans, tomatoes and their juices, and Cajun seasoning. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours.

Stir well and turn off the slow cooker. Add the hot sauce and baby spinach, cover, and let sit an additional 5 minutes. Serve warm with a garnish of shaved Parmesan.

Cajun Seafood Macaroni and Cheese

I honestly think I could enjoy some kind of macaroni and cheese weekly. This recipe honors our friends from the great state of Louisiana with a spicy kick.

Yield: 8 servings

6 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
4 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened and divided
1 small sweet onion, peeled and finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
3 cups half-and-half
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1/2 teaspoon white pepper
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 pound small raw shrimp
2 cups shredded Swiss cheese
3/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese, divided
1/2 cup dry bread crumbs
1/2 teaspoon Cajun seasoning

Place the water and salt in a large pot over high heat. When boiling, add the macaroni and cook for 6 minutes. Drain and rinse under cold water. Transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker and set aside.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan over



★
New Orleans Roast
Beef Po' Boys
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medium heat, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter. Add the onions and garlic and cook for 4 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Whisk in the half-and-half, garlic salt, white pepper, and cayenne. When the mixture comes to a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 2 minutes. Pour over the macaroni and stir in the shrimp, Swiss cheese, and 1/2 cup of the Parmesan.

In a medium bowl stir together the remaining 1/4 cup Parmesan, remaining 2 tablespoons butter, bread crumbs, and Cajun seasoning. Scatter evenly over the macaroni mixture. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours or on high for 1 1/2 hours. Let stand uncovered for 10 minutes before serving warm.

New Orleans Roast Beef Po' Boys

The best roast beef sandwich I ever had was from an off-the-beaten-path restaurant on the way to Lake Pontchartrain. I worked for quite some time to replicate that experience and you'll love the outcome. The cooking juices provide just the right amount of liquid to soften the bread with each bite. Even kids will like these Southern subs!

Yield: 8 servings

1 (3 1/2-pound) beef chuck roast or rump roast, trimmed

1 bay leaf
1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium beef stock
1 (10.5-ounce) can condensed French onion soup
1 cup dry red wine, beer, or additional low-sodium beef stock
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
6 French rolls
3 tablespoons mayonnaise
6 slices Provolone cheese

Place the roast and bay leaf in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a large bowl whisk together the stock, soup, wine, pepper, and garlic powder. Pour over the roast. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or until the meat is falling apart tender. Remove and discard the bay leaf and transfer the roast to a cutting board with a liquid moat. Cover with aluminum foil and let rest for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the broiler on high and split the French rolls. Place on a baking sheet with the split side up and toast until lightly browned. Set aside to cool slightly. Spread evenly with the mayonnaise and place the Provolone on the top half of the roll. Pour the cooking liquid into a gravy boat, then into individual bowls for dipping.

Slice the beef and evenly distribute on the bottom of each toasted roll. Top and serve warm with the dipping juices.

VARIATION: Substitute slices of Monterey Jack or Swiss cheese for the Provolone.

CAKE



Lemon Sour Cream Cake
Sorghum Spiced Spoon Cake
Southern Pecan Cake
Butterscotch Cream Cake
Spiced Fruit Gingerbread
Peanut Butter Cake

Lemon Sour Cream Cake

I love this moist cake, and all it needs for serving is a garnish of freshly whipped cream or a dusting of powdered sugar. Parchment paper gives the edges a nice irregular look and makes cleanup of the slow cooker a breeze!

Yield: 8 servings

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain cornmeal
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sticks) unsalted butter, softened
 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups plus 6 tablespoons sugar, divided
 2 eggs
 1 cup sour cream
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pure lemon extract
 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest
 1 teaspoon poppy seeds
 3 tablespoons lemon juice

Line a lightly greased medium slow cooker with parchment paper, making sure there is plenty of excess to come up the sides. Set aside.

In a medium bowl combine the flour, cornmeal, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. In a large bowl of an electric mixer, beat the butter and 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups of the sugar at medium speed until smooth, about 2 minutes. Add the eggs and beat another 2 minutes. At low speed, fold in the sour cream, lemon extract, lemon zest, and poppy seeds. Slowly add the flour mixture and blend well. Pour the batter onto the parchment paper in the slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours or until a cake tester or pick inserted in the center comes out clean.

In a small bowl whisk together the lemon juice and the remaining 6 tablespoons of sugar. Drizzle evenly over the top of the cake and let set for 2 minutes. Using the parchment paper excess as handles, remove the cake from the slow cooker and let cool on a wire rack for at least 15 minutes before serving warm. Or let the cake cool completely and serve it at room temperature.

Sorghum Spiced Spoon Cake

This recipe straddles a couple of fences. It is not quite a cake (too soft), but it's not a pudding either (too firm). So in honor of spoonbread, I'm calling this a spoon cake. It oozes with a melding of comforting fall spices.

Yield: 8 servings

11 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided and softened
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white sugar
 1 egg white
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 1 cup water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sorghum syrup
 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup baking soda
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground ginger
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground allspice
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped walnuts or pecans
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup firmly packed brown sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup hot water
 Fresh whipped cream for garnish

In the bowl of an electric mixer, combine

4 tablespoons of the butter and the white sugar for 2 minutes at medium speed or until light and fluffy. Fold in the egg white and vanilla on low speed until well blended.

In a small bowl whisk together the water and sorghum. Set aside. In a medium bowl stir together the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, allspice, salt, and nutmeg. Add to the butter mixture alternately with the sorghum mixture, beating well after each addition. Fold in the nuts.

Transfer the batter to a lightly greased small slow cooker and sprinkle the top evenly with the brown sugar. In a small bowl whisk together the remaining 7 tablespoons butter and the hot water until the butter is completely melted. Pour over the cake, but do not stir. Cover and cook on high for 2 to 2 1/2 hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Let stand for 15 minutes before spooning into serving bowls. Serve with a garnish of fresh whipped cream.

Southern Pecan Cake

This delicate little cake is just as nice after a long hard day as it is the following morning sliced and toasted for breakfast. If desired, you can substitute walnuts for the pecans.

Yield: 8 servings

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
2 cups sugar
1 cup vanilla or plain nonfat yogurt
6 eggs
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
1 1/2 cups chopped pecans
Freshly whipped cream

Lightly grease the bottom and sides of a large slow cooker. Cut a piece of waxed paper to fit the bottom and also grease the paper. Set aside.

In a large bowl of an electric mixer, beat the butter at medium speed until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the sugar and mix for another minute. At low speed, fold in the yogurt and eggs until blended. In a medium bowl combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. With the mixer on low speed, add the flour mixture until just blended. Stir in the pecans.

Transfer the batter to the prepared slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 2 hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove the insert from the slow cooker and place on a wire rack to cool for 30 minutes. Place the wire rack upside down on the top of the slow cooker insert and invert the cake onto the rack. Remove the waxed paper and let cool completely. Serve with a garnish of freshly whipped cream.



Spiced Fruit Gingerbread
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Butterscotch Cream Cake

Butterscotch is an odd name for a flavor combination of butter and brown sugar. Instead of standing over the stove to make it yourself, handy butterscotch chips come to the rescue.

Yield: 10 servings

1 (18.25-ounce) box yellow cake mix
1 cup water
4 eggs
½ cup vegetable oil
½ cup sour cream
2 cups butterscotch chips

In a large bowl combine the cake mix, water, eggs, oil, and sour cream, beating well until smooth. Pour into a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 2 hours. Sprinkle the top evenly with the butterscotch chips. Cover and cook an additional 30 minutes or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Uncover and cool at least 30 minutes before serving. For slices, allow the cake to cool completely.

Spiced Fruit Gingerbread

Dried peaches, honey, and fruit nectar give this incredibly moist cake character. Feel free to substitute other dried fruits you have on hand for the peaches, such as dried apples, cranberries, or mangoes.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground ginger
½ teaspoon allspice
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
4 eggs
¾ cup honey
1 cup peach nectar
1 cup chopped dried peaches
Freshly whipped cream for garnish

In a medium bowl stir together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, allspice, and salt. Place the butter and brown sugar in a large bowl of an electric mixer and beat at medium speed for 2 minutes or until creamy. Stir in the eggs and honey. With the mixer speed on low, alternately add the flour mixture and nectar until well combined. Stir in the dried peaches.

Transfer the batter to a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 2 to 3 hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out with moist crumbs. Spoon the gingerbread into warm serving bowls and garnish with a dollop of freshly whipped cream.

If the gingerbread is ready, but you aren't quite ready to serve, simply turn off the slow cooker and uncover. Place a folded clean kitchen towel on the top of the slow cooker and replace the cover on top of the towel. The gingerbread will stay warm for up to one hour.



Peanut Butter Cake
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Peanut Butter Cake

I have had this recipe for so long that I don't know where it came from. It was written on an ancient recipe card that went into my very first recipe box. I have updated it a bit and love the intoxicating aroma it spreads through my entire house as it cooks.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

¾ cup sugar, divided
 ½ cup all-purpose flour
 ¾ teaspoon baking powder
 Pinch of salt
 ⅓ cup milk
 ¼ cup smooth peanut butter
 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 ½ teaspoon butter extract or pure vanilla extract
 1 cup hot water
 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
 Vanilla ice cream

In a small bowl stir together ¼ cup of the sugar, flour, baking powder, and salt. Set aside. In a large bowl of an electric mixer, combine the milk, peanut butter, oil, and butter extract. Slowly add the flour mixture with the mixer speed on low. When well blended, transfer to a lightly greased small slow cooker.

In a small bowl stir together the hot water, remaining ½ cup sugar, and cocoa powder. Evenly pour over the batter and do not stir. Cover and cook on high for 1 ½ to 2 hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Uncover and let stand for 15 minutes before spooning into serving bowls. Serve warm with scoops of vanilla ice cream.



CARROTS



Pineapple Carrot Cake
Sugared Baby Carrots
Florida Sunshine Carrots
Honey-Glazed Carrots
Herbed Carrots and Potatoes
Cinnamon Sugar Buttered Carrots

Pineapple Carrot Cake

Crushed pineapple is frequently added to carrot cake recipes to keep it nice and moist. Add the slow cooker, and this recipe is soft as velvet.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 (8-ounce) can crushed pineapple, undrained
1 (18.25-ounce) box carrot cake mix
½ cup vegetable oil
3 eggs
½ cup chopped pecans or golden raisins

Lightly grease a small or medium slow cooker. Place the butter and brown sugar in the slow cooker and stir until well combined. Drain the pineapple, reserving the juice in a measuring cup. Place the pineapple on top of the butter mixture. Add enough water to the reserved juice to make 1 cup.

In a medium bowl combine the juice, carrot cake mix, oil, eggs, and pecans. Stir well to combine and pour over the pineapple. Do not stir. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove the insert from the slow cooker and cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a spatula around the sides of the cake to loosen and invert onto a serving platter. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Sugared Baby Carrots

I always have baby carrots in my refrigerator because I like snacking on them. But they are equally delicious when slow cooked with a butter and sugar syrup. I like carrots to

still have a bit of crunch left in them when cooked, so if you like them softer, increase the cooking time by an hour.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

2 (16-ounce) bags baby carrots
½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in pieces
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
Fresh chopped parsley for garnish

Place the carrots in a lightly greased small or medium slow cooker. Sprinkle with the brown sugar and dot with the butter. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours. Stir well and serve warm with a garnish of fresh parsley.

Florida Sunshine Carrots

Add a bit of South Florida to your baby carrots with sunshine-filled crushed pineapple. It underlines the natural sweetness of this vegetable as it softens in the slow cooker.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

2 (16-ounce) bags baby carrots
1 (8-ounce) can crushed pineapple, undrained
½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in pieces
Toasted shredded coconut for garnish

Place the carrots in a lightly greased small or medium slow cooker. Top with the pineapple and their juices, then sprinkle with the brown sugar. Dot with the butter. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours. Stir well and serve warm with a garnish of toasted coconut.



Herbed Carrots and Potatoes
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Honey-Glazed Carrots

I am always looking for ways to use the vast array of honey jars I tend to gather as I am out and about visiting local farms. Carrots are such a fit with this natural sweetener, and I love eating the leftovers cold!

Yield: 4 to 5 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) bag baby carrots
- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in pieces
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

Place the carrots in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Drizzle with the honey and dot with the butter. Sprinkle with the salt. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Stir well and serve warm.

Herbed Carrots and Potatoes

It's amazing what herbs can do to a dish. Even with a gentle hand, you can get subtle results that are refreshing. This is a great dish to serve with baked ham or rotisserie chicken.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) bag baby carrots
- 2 large red potatoes, cut in thin wedges
- 1/2 cup low-sodium vegetable stock
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Place the carrots, potatoes, stock, thyme, onion powder, garlic salt, and pepper in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Gently stir and serve warm.

Cinnamon Sugar Buttered Carrots

A mixture of cinnamon and sugar is a great combination, and I love mixing up fresh batches to give in holiday kitchen baskets. Here, it spices up baby carrots and is superb served with grilled fish.

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) bag baby carrots
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, cut in pieces
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper

Place the carrots and orange juice in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Sprinkle with the brown sugar and dot with the butter. Sprinkle evenly with the cinnamon, salt, and white pepper. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. For softer carrots, cook up to 5 1/2 hours. Stir well and serve warm.





CHEESE



Cheddar Cheese Bread Pudding
Slow-Cooker Celery and Cheese Soup

Beer Cheese Soup

Pepper Cheese Dip

Goat Cheese Fondue

Crescent Baked Brie

Pimiento Cheese Fondue

Hot and Spicy Cheese Dip

Tina's Incredible Cheese Dip

Cheddar Cheese Bread Pudding

You can quickly change the look and flavor of this terrific side dish by changing the beer you put in it. Hearty, dark beer will give this dish a darker color and more flavor, which is a good option if you're serving it with beef. If you are serving it with fish or poultry, use a light beer.

Yield: 6 servings

7 cups cubed sourdough bread (around 1-inch cubes)
3 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese, divided
4 eggs
3 cups low-sodium beef stock or beer
1 cup half-and-half
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1/4 teaspoon white pepper
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
Paprika for garnish

Place the bread and 2 1/2 cups of the cheese in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a large bowl whisk together the eggs, stock, half-and-half, mustard, white pepper, and cayenne. Pour over the bread mixture and press down with the back of a wooden spoon to make sure all the bread is submerged. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Sprinkle the remaining 1/2 cup cheese on top and let stand for 10 minutes before serving with a garnish of paprika.

Slow-Cooker Celery and Cheese Soup

The creamy and silky texture of this soup will chase any blues away. I especially like to serve it in bread bowls.

Yield: 4 servings

2 (10.75-ounce) cans condensed cream of celery soup
2 cups crumbled blue cheese or 4 cups shredded Cheddar cheese
1 large red bell pepper, seeded and finely chopped
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 1/4 cups half-and-half
Fresh snipped chives for garnish

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the soup, cheese, red peppers, paprika, Worcestershire, garlic salt, and black pepper. Cover and cook on low for 2 hours. Add the half-and-half and stir until well blended. Cover and cook another 30 minutes. Serve warm with a garnish of chives.

VARIATION: Add 1 cup cooked cubed chicken or turkey when you add the half-and-half.

Beer Cheese Soup

The combination of beer and cheese is simply magic. The first time I had this, popcorn was the garnish instead of regular croutons. I have been serving it that way ever since!

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

6 baking potatoes, peeled and diced
2 small sweet onions, peeled and chopped
1 (12-ounce) can beer or 1 1/2 cups low-sodium beef stock
1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium chicken stock
1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 teaspoon white pepper
1/4 teaspoon paprika

2 cups shredded Colby cheese
Popped popcorn for garnish

Place the potatoes, onions, beer, stock, garlic salt, white pepper, and paprika in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Using a potato masher, mash the vegetables and stir in the cheese. Cover and cook an additional 10 minutes. Serve warm with popcorn as a garnish.

VARIATION: Add a pound of browned spicy pork sausage to the soup along with the other ingredients and cook as directed above.

Pepper Cheese Dip

Want to keep kids of all ages happy? Make this cheese dip on a regular basis and watch their smiles erupt into fun giggles. Omit the green chilies if you have picky eaters.

Yield: 3 2/3 cups

2 (10.75-ounce) cans condensed Cheddar cheese soup
1 (4.5-ounce) can diced green chilies
1 cup shredded Pepper Jack cheese
2/3 cup evaporated milk
1/2 teaspoon paprika
Fresh snipped chives for garnish
Carrot sticks
Assorted crackers

Place the soup, chilies, cheese, evaporated milk, and paprika in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Stir well to combine. Cover and cook on low for 2 hours. Stir well and garnish with chives. Serve warm with carrot sticks and assorted crackers.

Goat Cheese Fondue

This recipe is incredibly scrumptious and one of those dishes you will keep returning to for more. Have lots of cubed, dense bread on hand.

Yield: 24 servings

3 (10- or 11-ounce) packages fresh plain goat cheese
3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
3 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons half-and-half
2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme
1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
1/2 teaspoon onion salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
Cubed French bread

Place the cheese, garlic, oil, half-and-half, thyme, chives, onion salt, and pepper in a lightly greased mini or small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Reduce the heat to warm and serve with cubed bread.



Pimiento Cheese Fondue
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Crescent Baked Brie

Place the prepared brie in an oven-safe dish that is then placed in your slow cooker or you'll have a mess of a time getting it out. I use a small shallow cake pan when I make this and it works perfectly.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

1 (8-ounce) can refrigerated crescent roll dough
1 (13.2-ounce) wheel of brie
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
Assorted crackers

Unroll the crescents onto a very lightly floured surface, but do not separate the dough into triangles. Instead, use a rolling pin or your fingers to press the seams together. Place the wheel of brie in the center of the dough. Pull the dough up and over the cheese, leaving the center open.

Place the wrapped brie in a lightly greased shallow dish and place in a large slow cooker. Wedge a chopstick underneath the slow cooker lid to vent. Cook on low for 3 to 3 1/2 hours or until the dough turns golden brown. Uncover and carefully remove the shallow dish from the slow cooker. With a large spatula, transfer brie to a platter and garnish the center with the chopped parsley. Serve warm with crackers.

Pimiento Cheese Fondue

I have loved pimiento cheese my entire life. A bowl of it stays in my refrigerator all summer. I knew I needed to find a way to turn that cheese magic into a warm dish for the winter months. This heavenly fondue is it.

Yield: 12 servings

1 (16-ounce) package processed American cheese loaf, cubed
1 cup shredded Gruyere cheese
1 cup low-sodium chicken stock or dry white wine
1 (4-ounce) jar diced pimientos, drained
2 teaspoons dry mustard
Cayenne pepper for garnish
Bread cubes

Place the cheese cubes, Gruyere, stock, pimientos, and mustard in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 1 1/2 hours. Stir well and reduce the heat to warm. Garnish with cayenne and serve with bread cubes.

Hot and Spicy Cheese Dip

I have been making this for years, and it is perfect for entertaining. You won't be able to pull guests away from it, so have plenty of chips!

Yield: 6 cups

1 pound ground hot pork sausage
4 green onions, sliced
1 (20-ounce) container medium or hot salsa
1 (16-ounce) package processed American cheese loaf, cubed
1 (16-ounce) jar processed cheese spread
Chips

Place the sausage in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Break into pieces with the spatula as it cooks. Cook 5 minutes or until no longer pink.

Meanwhile, place the onions, salsa, cheese cubes, and cheese spread in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Drain the sausage and transfer to the slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 2 to 3 hours. Serve warm with chips.

Tina's Incredible Cheese Dip

This is my twin sister's recipe for my favorite cheese dip of all time. It demands scoop-type chips and is perfect for fall football watching, whether you are tailgating or in front of your own television.

Yield: 12 servings

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 large yellow onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 large green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 (16-ounce) package processed American cheese loaf, cubed
- 1 (8-ounce) package processed American spicy cheese loaf, cubed

- 1 (15-ounce) can chili, with or without beans
- 1 (8-ounce) container mild, medium, or spicy salsa
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, cubed
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- Scoop-type chips

Place the beef in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook for 5 minutes or until no pink remains, breaking apart the meat with a spatula as it browns. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the onions, green peppers, cheese cubes, spicy cheese cubes, chili, salsa, cream cheese, and hot sauce. Cover and cook on low for 3 1/2 hours. Serve warm with chips.

CHERRIES



Cherry and Wild Rice Salad

Warm Cherry Cobbler

Cherry and Rhubarb Cookie Crisp

Cherry Almond Butter Cake

Cherry Rice Pudding

Chocolate-Covered Cherry Bread Pudding

Flameless Cherries Jubilee

★
Cherry and Wild Rice Salad
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Cherry and Wild Rice Salad

Wild rice gets a bit of spunk with dried cherries in a side dish that begs for an accompaniment of roasted chicken, pork, or turkey. Leftovers are great served at room temperature.

Yield: 8 servings

1 cup uncooked wild rice
 1 cup uncooked brown rice
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 1 (32-ounce) container low-sodium chicken stock
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 ½ teaspoon black pepper
 ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
 1 cup dried cherries, coarsely chopped
 1 cup coarsely chopped toasted pecans
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

Place the wild rice and brown rice in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Drizzle with the melted butter and toss to evenly coat. Add the stock, onions, pepper, and garlic salt. Cover and cook on high for 4 hours. Turn off the slow cooker and stir in the cherries. Cover and allow to rest for 15 minutes. Stir in the pecans and parsley. Serve warm.

Warm Cherry Cobbler

I adore the biscuit-like topping of this recipe that covers luscious cherries. The fresh season arrives during the summer months. If you miss it, you can substitute two (16-ounce) packages of frozen cherries instead.

Yield: 6 servings

6 cups fresh sweet or sour cherries, pitted
 ⅔ cup sugar, divided
 2 tablespoons plus 1 cup all-purpose flour, divided
 1 teaspoon baking powder
 ½ cup milk or half-and-half
 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 1 teaspoon pure almond extract
 Freshly whipped cream

Place the cherries in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Sprinkle with ⅓ cup of the sugar and 2 tablespoons of the flour. Toss gently and set aside.

In a medium bowl combine the remaining ⅓ cup sugar and 1 cup flour along with the baking powder. Stir in the milk, oil, and almond extract until well combined. Drop spoonfuls of the batter on top of the cherries.

Place a clean kitchen towel folded in half across the top of the slow-cooker insert and cover, allowing the excess towel to hang over the edges. Cook on low for 3 hours or on high for 1 ½ hours. Uncover and cool 5 minutes before serving warm with freshly whipped cream.

Cherry and Rhubarb Cookie Crisp

I would be willing to bet there're a lot of people out there who have had rhubarb and didn't know it. When it's nestled in with other fruits, it sings, and tart cherries are the anchor here.

Yield: 8 servings

2 (16-ounce) packages frozen sliced rhubarb
2 (14.5-ounce) cans tart pitted cherries, drained
1 ½ cups firmly packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
2 teaspoons pure almond extract
2 cups coarsely crushed shortbread cookies
¼ cup slivered almonds

Place the rhubarb and cherries in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Add the brown sugar and lemon juice, tossing to coat the fruit. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours. Stir in the butter and almond extract. Let stand uncovered for 5 minutes. Spoon into individual serving dishes and evenly top with the cookie crumbs and almonds. Serve warm.

Cherry Almond Butter Cake

You'll find many reasons to continue making this dish because it's downright divine. You can embellish it with freshly whipped cream or ice cream, but honestly, it's just fine all by itself.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

1 (21-ounce) can cherry pie filling
1 (18.25-ounce) package yellow cake mix

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
⅓ cup chopped almonds

Place the pie filling in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a medium bowl combine the cake mix and butter. Spread evenly over the pie filling and top with the almonds. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Turn off the slow cooker and uncover. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving warm.

Cherry Rice Pudding

I don't know why rice pudding isn't more popular than it is. I love the texture and how it serves as the perfect anchor for so many flavors. I beg you to give this old-time favorite a try. Substitute another dried fruit if you wish or use a combination.

Yield: 6 servings

1 ½ cups half-and-half
1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
3 cups cooked white rice
½ cup dried cherries
¾ teaspoon pure almond extract

Place the half-and-half, condensed milk, rice, cherries, and almond extract in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 3 to 4 hours or until the liquid is absorbed. Stir well and serve warm.

Chocolate-Covered Cherry Bread Pudding

My husband and I dearly love those festive boxes of chocolate-covered cherries that arrive for the holidays. I took that same flavor combination and turned it into a dessert treat we can enjoy all year long.

Yield: 6 servings

10 slices white sandwich bread, cubed
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup dried cherries
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup semisweet chocolate chips
 4 eggs
 1 cup milk
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup half-and-half
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cocoa powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pure almond extract
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup slivered almonds, toasted
 Freshly whipped cream for garnish

Place the bread cubes in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Sprinkle evenly with the cherries and chocolate chips. In a medium bowl whisk together the eggs, milk, half-and-half, sugar, cocoa powder, and almond extract. Pour over the bread cubes and press down with a spatula to thoroughly soak the bread.

Cover and cook on low for $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 hours or until the pudding is set. Uncover and sprinkle with the almonds. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving with a garnish of freshly whipped cream.

Flameless Cherries Jubilee

I don't know many home cooks who are comfortable setting their food on fire in the kitchen. For that reason, I was determined to create a version of cherries jubilee that doesn't require ignition. Success! It should be married to vanilla ice cream, but you can also serve it on toasted slices of pound cake.

Yield: 8 servings

2 (16-ounce) packages frozen pitted sour cherries
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup firmly packed brown sugar
 2 tablespoons Kirsch or cherry brandy
 1 teaspoon pure almond extract
 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 1 tablespoon cornstarch
 Vanilla ice cream

Place the cherries, brown sugar, brandy, and almond extract in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a small bowl stir together the butter and cornstarch until smooth. Stir into the cherry mixture, tossing to lightly coat. Cover and cook on high for 3 hours. Turn off the heat, uncover, and let stand for 5 minutes before spooning over scoops of vanilla ice cream.



CHICKEN



Coconut Milk Chicken Breasts
Harvest the Garden Chicken
Southern Lady Hot Wing Dip
Some Like It Hot Buffalo Chicken
Citrus Chicken Thighs
No Game Brunswick Stew
Soothing Spring Lemon Chicken
Best Barbecued Chicken
Low and Slow Creamed Chicken
Toasted Coconut Chicken Thighs
Brown Sugar Chicken
Golden Garlic Chicken and Vegetables
New-Fashioned Chicken and Rice
Feeling Gravy Chicken and Vegetables
Mushroom-Smothered Chicken
South Florida Fruit Chicken
Chicken and Biscuits
Chicken Noodle Soup
Chicken and Dumplings
Texas Tortilla Soup

Coconut Milk Chicken Breasts

I always keep cans of coconut milk on my pantry shelves because it adds a rich luxury to tons of dishes. Chicken gets the benefit here, along with sturdy chickpeas and juicy pineapple.

Yield: 6 servings

6 skinless bone-in chicken breasts
1 (14.5-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 (15.5-ounce) can pineapple slices, undrained
2 cups baby carrots
1 red bell pepper, seeded and julienned
½ cup coconut milk
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons sugar
2 teaspoons curry powder
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon lime juice
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
Fresh snipped chives for garnish

Place the chicken and chickpeas in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the pineapple slices and juice, as well as the carrots and red peppers. In a small bowl whisk together the coconut milk and cornstarch until smooth. Stir in the sugar, curry powder, garlic salt, black pepper, lime juice, and red pepper flakes. Pour milk mixture over chicken. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh snipped chives.

Harvest the Garden Chicken

This dish has come to my weekend dinner rescue numerous times. I can count on it to utilize the abundance of vegetables I regularly harvest from my garden. While it cooks, I have more time for pulling weeds!

Yield: 8 servings

4 pounds skinless bone-in chicken breasts
¼ cup all-purpose flour
6 large tomatoes, peeled and chopped
2 cups sliced mushrooms
4 carrots, peeled and chopped
1 large potato, peeled and chopped
1 large green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
½ cup low-sodium chicken stock or dry white wine
¾ teaspoon dry Italian seasoning
¼ teaspoon garlic salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
⅔ cup tomato sauce
Fresh basil for garnish

In a large bowl toss the chicken with the flour and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Top with the tomatoes, mushrooms, carrots, potatoes, and green peppers. In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the stock, Italian seasoning, garlic salt, and black pepper. Shake to emulsify and pour over the vegetables. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 4 hours. Stir in the tomato sauce during the last 15 minutes of cooking. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh basil.



Harvest the Garden Chicken
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Southern Lady Hot Wing Dip

Hot wings are terrific . . . and terrifically messy. There is no way to subtly eat these fun chicken pieces, until now. By transforming the wings into a dip, you get all the flavor of hot wings without the need for hand and face washing afterward!

Yield: 4 1/2 cups

2 1/2 cups cooked chopped chicken
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, cubed
2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
1 cup ranch-style salad dressing
1/2 cup hot sauce
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
Celery stalks

Place the chicken, cream cheese, Cheddar cheese, salad dressing, hot sauce, and pepper in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Stir in the chopped parsley and serve with celery stalks.

Some Like It Hot Buffalo Chicken

This just-right hot chicken is as versatile as can be. It can be added to toasted bread or taco shells, put on top of salad greens, or wrapped in a tortilla. I like it on a hamburger bun with a generous helping of freshly prepared coleslaw.

Yield: 8 servings

1 1/2 pounds (around 4) skinless boneless chicken breasts
1/4 cup hot wing sauce
2/3 cup low-sodium chicken stock

Place the chicken in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a medium bowl whisk together the hot wing sauce and stock until smooth. Pour over the chicken. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 5 1/2 to 6 hours. Shred the chicken with two forks and serve warm with the sauce.

NOTE: You can serve with extra-hot wing sauce if desired, or with a drizzle of blue cheese salad dressing.

Citrus Chicken Thighs

This dish looks and tastes like sunshine. I love to prepare it in the late winter when spring is on my mind but the temperatures are still low. The zesty flavor makes me feel like winter is close to being in the rear-view mirror!

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

8 skinless bone-in chicken thighs
1 teaspoon seasoned salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 pound small fingerling or red potatoes
1 acorn squash, peeled, seeded, and cut in 1-inch pieces
12 garlic cloves, peeled
1 orange, cut in 1/4-inch slices crosswise
2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
1 tablespoon sorghum syrup or honey
8 sprigs fresh thyme

Place the chicken in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker and sprinkle evenly with the seasoned salt and pepper. Cover with the potatoes, squash, garlic, oranges, stock, and sorghum. Lay the thyme sprigs on top. Cover and cook on high for 2 1/2 hours. Remove and discard the thyme. Serve warm.



*Citrus Chicken Thighs
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No Game Brunswick Stew

Traditional Brunswick stew contains chicken and small game, such as rabbit or squirrel. This one contains only chicken for a more family-friendly version. It doesn't require the long cooking of some stews, so if you start in the early afternoon, you can still have it ready at dinnertime.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 (14-ounce) package frozen pearl onions
- 6 skinless bone-in chicken breasts
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, diced
- 2 (15-ounce) cans cream-style corn
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (15.25-ounce) can lima beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon hot sauce

Scatter the onions on the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Place the chicken on top and dot with the butter cubes.

In a large bowl combine the corn, tomatoes and their juices, lima beans, stock, vinegar, mustard, garlic salt, pepper, and hot sauce. Pour over the chicken and cover. Cook on low for 4 hours and remove the chicken. Shred with two forks and discard the bones. Return chicken to the stew and stir well. Cover and cook an additional 20 minutes before serving warm.

Soothing Spring Lemon Chicken

When days are warming up but the evenings are still cool, your slow cooker can be quite handy. This soul-soothing recipe hints of sunshine ahead, even though there is a need to leave those blankets out just a little while longer.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) package baby carrots
- 1 pound red new potatoes, cubed
- 2 celery stalks, sliced
- 1 (14-ounce) package frozen pearl onions, thawed
- 6 skinless bone-in chicken breasts
- 1 (10.5-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt

Place the carrots, potatoes, celery, and onions in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Top with the chicken. In a medium bowl whisk together the soup, milk, lemon juice, parsley, thyme, pepper, and garlic salt. Pour over the chicken. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or until the chicken is done and no longer pink in the middle. Serve warm.

Best Barbecued Chicken

There is nothing quite like getting barbecue sauce all over yourself when eating chicken. I am convinced it's the best reason to own paper napkins. This recipe is perfect for using a whole cut-up chicken so everyone can select their favorite piece.

Yield: 6 servings

1/2 cup cola
 1/3 cup ketchup
 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
 2 tablespoons bourbon, optional
 1 (3 1/2-pound) whole chicken, cut in pieces
 2 teaspoons onion salt
 1 1/2 teaspoons paprika
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Lightly grease a large slow cooker. In a medium bowl whisk together the cola, ketchup, brown sugar, vinegar, and bourbon. Pour in the slow cooker. Place the chicken on top of the liquid in as much of a single layer as possible, turning to coat with the liquid mixture.

In a small bowl combine the onion salt, paprika, garlic powder, and pepper. Sprinkle evenly over the chicken. Cover and cook on low for 7 1/2 hours or on high for 4 1/2 to 5 hours. Transfer the chicken pieces to a deep serving platter and skim off the fat from the pan juices. Pour the leftover juices over the chicken pieces and serve warm.

VARIATION: If using boneless chicken breasts, check for doneness after 6 hours on low and 4 hours on high.

Low and Slow Creamed Chicken

This is a recipe you can put in the slow cooker in the afternoon and still have dinner ready on time. I like to serve it over whole wheat toast, but kids might prefer rice or pasta.

Yield: 6 servings

6 skinless boneless chicken breasts
 2 teaspoons garlic salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese
 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken stock or dry white wine
 1 (.7-ounce) envelope Italian dressing mix
 1 (8-ounce) package sliced fresh mushrooms
 1 (2-ounce) jar diced pimientos, drained

Sprinkle the chicken breasts evenly with the garlic salt and pepper and set aside. Pour the oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the chicken and lightly brown both sides for 3 minutes on each side. Transfer the chicken to a lightly greased large slow cooker.

Reduce the heat on the stovetop to medium and add the soup, cream cheese, stock, and dressing mix to the hot drippings in the skillet. Cook, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes. The cheese should be melted and the mixture smooth.

Arrange the mushrooms over the chicken, then the pimientos. Spoon the soup mixture over the top. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours or until the chicken is completely done. To serve, transfer the chicken onto serving plates or a serving platter and stir the creamed mixture well. Spoon on top of the chicken and serve warm.

Toasted Coconut Chicken Thighs

Yes, coconut is grown in the most Southern areas of Florida, and I love how it enriches chicken thighs. You won't find a more economical chicken cut, and I love the crunch it gets from toasted pecans. Curry paste can be either mild or hot, so select it according to your taste. This recipe passes the kid challenge!

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 tablespoon canola or vegetable oil
- 8 bone-in chicken thighs
- 8 carrots, peeled and cut in 1-inch slices
- 1 cup coconut milk, divided
- 1/4 cup curry paste
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans, toasted
- 1/4 cup shredded coconut, toasted

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add half of the chicken with the skin side down. Cook for 7 to 8 minutes without turning. Drain on paper towels and repeat with the remaining half of the chicken. Pour the pan drippings into a container and store in the refrigerator until you're ready to make the gravy.

Place the carrots in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a small bowl whisk together 1/2 cup coconut milk, curry paste, red pepper flakes, and white pepper. Pour over the carrots and place the chicken on top with the browned skin side up. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours or on high for 3 1/2 hours.

Transfer the chicken to a serving platter and top with the pecans and coconut. Whisk the remaining 1/2 cup coconut milk into the pan drippings. Transfer to a gravy boat and serve warm with the chicken.

Brown Sugar Chicken

This recipe is a great reason to leave the slow cooker out during the summer months. It uses ingredients you likely already have in your pantry, and you'll love serving it with all those garden-fresh vegetables. And a bonus is that picky kids love this!

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 4 skinless bone-in chicken breasts
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can pineapple slices, undrained
- 1/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon onion salt
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the chicken and brown for 2 minutes on each side. Transfer to a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Drain the pineapple over a medium bowl and reserve the juice. Place the pineapple slices on top of the chicken. Whisk the brown sugar, cornstarch, lemon juice, onion salt, and white pepper into the reserved pineapple juice. Pour over the pineapple-topped chicken. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours or until the chicken is done. Serve warm.

★
Brown Sugar Chicken
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Golden Garlic Chicken and Vegetables

You'll likely do a double take when you see the amount of garlic in this dish. It is not a misprint! Just give it a try and you'll see how mellow it becomes thanks to the slow cooker.

Yield: 6 servings

- 6 Yukon gold potatoes, cut in wedges
- 1 (3 1/2-pound) chicken, cut in pieces and the skin removed
- 1 (8-ounce) package whole button mushrooms
- 1 garlic bulb (about 12 cloves), separated and peeled
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken stock
- 3 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon milk
- 4 teaspoons cornstarch

Place the potatoes in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Top with the chicken pieces, then the mushrooms and garlic. In a small bowl whisk together the stock, oregano, salt, black pepper, and white pepper. Pour over the top and drizzle with the oil. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or until the chicken is done.

When the chicken is ready, combine the milk and cornstarch in a small saucepan, whisking until smooth. Remove the chicken and vegetables to a large serving dish. Cover to keep warm. Strain the cooking juices into the saucepan with the cornstarch mixture. Place over high heat and bring to a boil. Cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes or until thickened. Pour over the chicken and vegetables and serve immediately.

New-Fashioned Chicken and Rice

To this day, I dearly love the combination of chicken cooked on a bed of rice. This updated version uses wild rice and is garnished with toasted pecans. It's a new classic.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 6 skinless boneless chicken breasts
- 1 (6-ounce) package long-grain and wild rice mix
- 1/2 pound sliced mushrooms
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of celery soup
- 1/2 cup water or low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon dried tarragon
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped toasted pecans
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Place the butter and oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the chicken and brown for 2 minutes on each side. Place the rice and mushrooms in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker.

In a large bowl combine the seasoning packet from the rice mix, soup, water, milk, parsley, thyme, tarragon, and pepper. Set aside. Place the browned chicken in the slow cooker on top of the mushrooms. Pour the soup mixture over the top. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours or until the chicken is done. Serve warm with a sprinkling of the pecans and chives on each serving.

VARIATIONS: Drizzle the chicken breasts with 1 tablespoon of honey before topping with the soup mixture.

Substitute an equal-sized can of condensed Cheddar cheese soup for the cream of celery soup.

Feeling Gravy Chicken and Vegetables

Gravy is a marvelous addition to anything. This one keeps the chicken moist while giving the vegetables a creamy bath. It's like a chicken pot pie without the pie!

Yield: 4 servings

2 tablespoons peanut oil
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
4 skinless boneless chicken breasts
4 red potatoes, cut in wedges
2 cups baby carrots
1 cup sliced mushrooms
4 canned whole green chilies, sliced
1 (10.5-ounce) can condensed French onion soup
1/3 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon poultry seasoning
1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. While the oil is heating up, place the flour in a large heavy-duty zip-top bag. Add the chicken a piece at a time and shake to evenly coat. Put chicken in the hot oil and brown for 3 minutes on each side.

Place the potatoes, carrots, mushrooms, and chilies in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a medium bowl whisk together the soup, milk, poultry seasoning,

garlic salt, and pepper. Pour half of the soup mixture over the vegetables.

Place the chicken on top and cover with the remaining soup mixture. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours or until the chicken is done and the vegetables are tender. Serve hot.

VARIATION: Add 1/2 cup of finely shredded Cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese to the top just before serving.

Mushroom-Smothered Chicken

Skinless, boneless chicken breasts can quickly become dry when grilled. But the slow cooker keeps them moist and juicy.

Yield: 4 servings

1 (8-ounce) package cremini or button mushrooms, quartered
1 (6-ounce) package shitake mushrooms, sliced
4 skinless boneless chicken breasts
2 green onions, sliced
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 (.7-ounce) envelope Italian salad dressing mix
1/2 cup low-sodium chicken stock or dry white wine
1 (10.75-ounce) condensed cream of celery or mushroom soup
1 (3-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
Hot cooked rice
Fresh snipped chives for garnish

Scatter the cremini and shitake mushrooms in the bottom of a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Top with the chicken and the onions. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter and stir in the dressing mix and stock. Stir in the soup and cream

cheese until the cheese has melted and the mixture is smooth. Pour the soup mixture over the chicken, cover, and cook on low for 4 1/2 hours. Serve over hot cooked rice with a garnish of fresh chives.

South Florida Fruit Chicken

This recipe was given to me by my mother, and it has quickly become one of my regulars. Serve it with brown rice or a green salad. If the chicken breasts you select are large, have the supermarket butcher cut them in half. This recipe is kid approved!

Yield: 4 servings

2 pounds small boneless chicken breasts
1 (15.5-ounce) can pineapple slices, undrained
1 (15-ounce) can mandarin oranges, undrained
1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/2 cup cornstarch
1 teaspoon ground ginger

Place the chicken in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Drain the pineapple and reserve 1/4 cup of the juice. Place the pineapple slices on top of the chicken. Drain the oranges and reserve 1/4 cup of the juice. Place the oranges evenly on the pineapple slices. In a medium bowl whisk together the reserved pineapple and orange juices, brown sugar, cornstarch, and ginger. Pour over the top of the chicken mixture. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours, then increase to high and cook an additional 2 hours. Serve warm.

Chicken and Biscuits

Think of this recipe as a super-simple upside-down version of chicken pot pie. It is incredibly economical and soul warming.

Yield: 6 servings

5 skinless boneless chicken breasts, cubed
1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
2 green onions, sliced
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 (10-ounce) package frozen English peas and carrots
1 (16.3-ounce) container refrigerated biscuits

Place the chicken in a lightly greased medium slow cooker and cover with the soup. Sprinkle with the green onions and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Stir in the frozen peas and carrots. Cover and cook an additional 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, bake the biscuits according to the package directions. Spoon the chicken mixture over the split biscuits and serve warm.

Chicken Noodle Soup

Let's all agree that the medicinal value of this soup is as enticing as the flavor. It's comforting on a chilly day, which is when this soup tastes best.

Yield: 4 servings

4 skinless boneless chicken breasts, cubed
 1 (48-ounce) container low-sodium chicken stock
 4 cups water
 4 chicken bouillon cubes
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 3 celery stalks, chopped
 3 carrots, peeled and chopped
 8 button mushrooms, sliced
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup frozen English peas
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
 1 tablespoon dried parsley
 1 teaspoon garlic salt
 1 teaspoon black pepper
 1 teaspoon dried thyme
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon paprika
 2 cups thin egg noodles

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, combine the chicken, stock, water, bouillon, onions, celery, carrots, mushrooms, peas, butter, parsley, garlic salt, pepper, thyme, cumin, and paprika. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Stir in the noodles, cover, and cook an additional 30 minutes. Serve warm.

Chicken and Dumplings

I like thin, noodle-like dumplings rather than those with a biscuit-type topping. And I don't want it loaded with items that are in a chicken pot pie either. This is so soothing and just the basics: chicken that bubbles away in a creamy broth and dumplings added near the end of the cooking time when you can hardly wait for dinner any longer!

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

4 skinless boneless chicken breasts, cubed
 2 (10.75-ounce) cans condensed cream of chicken soup
 1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium chicken stock
 1 cup warm water
 1 large carrot or shallot, peeled and chopped
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup self-rising flour
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cold water

Place the chicken, soup, stock, warm water, carrots, butter, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Stir well to combine. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours.

In a small bowl combine the flour and cold water, stirring to make a dough. Turn out onto a heavily floured surface, rolling to coat the outside of the dough in flour. Roll to $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thickness and cut into 6-inch long strips with a pizza cutter or sharp knife. Drop the dumpling strips into the slow cooker and gently stir. Cover and cook for 45 minutes longer. Serve hot.

Texas Tortilla Soup

Slowly simmered chicken, corn, and tomatoes are topped with crispy tortilla strips to give dinner a Texas-style bit of glam. Serve with big tablespoons rather than smaller teaspoons. Kids love loads of the crispy tortilla strips, so make extra if necessary.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 (8-ounce) package skinless boneless chicken breasts or strips, cubed
- 1 (32-ounce) carton low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can tomato puree
- 1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
- 1 (8.5-ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained and rinsed
- 1 teaspoon onion salt
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 (5-inch) corn tortillas, cut in thin strips
- 1/4 cup milk, room temperature
- Chopped fresh cilantro for garnish

Place the chicken, stock, puree, tomatoes and green chilies and their juices, corn, onion salt, chili powder, cumin, garlic powder, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 5 to 6 hours.

Just before serving, preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Place the tortilla strips on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 7 minutes or until crispy. Meanwhile, stir the milk into the soup. Let stand uncovered for 5 minutes. Serve the soup in warm bowls topped with the tortilla strips and a sprinkling of cilantro.

TIP: A pizza cutter makes cutting the tortillas into thin strips super easy and quick.

CHILI



Turkey x 2 Chili
Down-Home Chili Dogs
Beef Salsa Chili
Wheat Berry Chili
White Bean Chili
Black Bean and Chicken Chili
Stew Meat Chili
Hot and Spicy Chorizo and Beef Chili
Hominy and Chicken Chili
Tried and True Beef and Bean Chili
Thanksgiving Chili
No Bean Chili
Purple Hull and Pork Chili
Meat Lovers Chili
Texas Chili with Tortilla Dumplings

Turkey x 2 Chili

This is a fabulous recipe for using up cooked turkey, and if you haven't tried turkey sausage, this is a great excuse to do so. It is low in fat and boosts the healthy aspect of this yummy chili. Pair it with whole wheat dinner rolls.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) package ground turkey sausage
- 4 cups cubed cooked turkey
- 1 (32-ounce) carton low-sodium beef stock
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 4 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 shallot, peeled and chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Place the sausage in a large skillet over medium heat and cook for 5 minutes, crumbling with the spatula as the meat cooks. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the turkey, stock, beans, tomatoes and their juices, carrots, shallots, green peppers, chili powder, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Stir in a tablespoon of hot sauce to kick up the heat.

Down-Home Chili Dogs

Pull out the paper napkins for this favorite that is delightfully messy. You can use a fork, but it won't be nearly as fun!

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 pound ground beef
- 8 hot dogs
- 1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 8 hot dog buns
- 1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese

In a large skillet over medium heat, brown the beef for 5 minutes or until no pink remains, breaking apart the meat with a spatula as it cooks.

Place the hot dogs in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a medium bowl whisk together the tomato sauce, water, Worcestershire, chili powder, mustard, garlic salt, black pepper, and cayenne. Drain the beef and place on the hot dogs. Top with the tomato mixture. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours. Serve on warm hot dog buns topped with the cheese.

NOTE: You can add a small peeled and chopped sweet onion to the mixture if desired.

Beef Salsa Chili

One Saturday morning I realized I had no canned diced tomatoes, but chili was on my mind. So I substituted some homemade salsa and it was a tasty success. If you don't have homemade, just use prepared salsa. The chunkier, the better!

Yield: 8 servings

1 ½ pounds ground beef
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 1 (16-ounce) can dark red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
 1 (16-ounce) can light red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
 1 (16-ounce) can low-sodium tomato sauce
 1 ½ cups salsa
 2 tablespoons chili powder
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 1 (12-ounce) bottle beer or 1 ½ cups low-sodium beef stock
 1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, brown the ground beef for 5 minutes or until no pink remains, breaking apart the beef with a spatula as it cooks. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker.

Add the onions, dark red kidney beans, light red kidney beans, tomato sauce, salsa, chili powder, pepper, and beer. Cover and cook on low for 5 to 6 hours or on high for 3 hours. Serve warm with a sprinkling of cheese.

Wheat Berry Chili

I tasted this chili for the first time years ago while judging a chili cook-off. I was shocked that it was classified as a meatless entry. It gets flavor from wheat berries, which are simply whole, unprocessed wheat kernels. They must be soaked overnight, so this recipe takes a bit of preplanning but is worth the effort.

Yield: 8 servings

¾ cup wheat berries, soaked overnight in the refrigerator

2 carrots, peeled and coarsely grated
 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 2 (15-ounce) cans pinto beans, drained and rinsed
 1 (28-ounce) can tomato puree
 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, undrained
 1 tablespoon chili powder
 ½ teaspoon onion salt
 ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
 ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
 1 ½ cups fresh or canned whole kernel yellow corn
 1 teaspoon hot sauce
 Sour cream for garnish

Drain and rinse the wheat berries and place in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the carrots, green peppers, beans, tomato puree, crushed tomatoes and their juices, chili powder, onion salt, cayenne, and garlic powder. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours or on high for 4 ½ hours. Stir in the corn and hot sauce. Allow to sit 10 minutes covered. Serve in warm bowls with a garnish of sour cream.

White Bean Chili

Sometimes it's nice if chili doesn't look like chili. This white version provides all the comfort with a different look. For vegetarian guests, just switch the stock to vegetable, omit the chicken, and sprinkle the top with tofu crumbles just prior to serving.

Yield: 10 servings

3 (15.5-ounce) cans great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
 1 white onion, peeled and chopped
 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 4 cups cooked diced chicken

1 ½ cups frozen shoepeg or white whole kernel corn
 1 (15-ounce) jar Alfredo sauce
 2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 2 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese
 1 cup sour cream
 1 ½ teaspoons white pepper
 1 ½ teaspoons ground cumin
 1 ½ teaspoons cayenne pepper
 Cilantro leaves for garnish

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, combine the beans, onions, garlic, yellow peppers, chicken, and corn. In a large bowl whisk together the Alfredo sauce, stock, cheese, sour cream, white pepper, cumin, and cayenne. Pour over the chicken mixture. Cover and cook on low for 3 to 4 hours. Serve with a garnish of fresh cilantro.

Black Bean and Chicken Chili

Canned beans are always on the pantry shelf in my house, and they have rescued me numerous times. In this dish, instead of the traditional chili beans, black beans shine.

Yield: 6 servings

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 1 pound skinless boneless chicken breasts, cubed
 2 (14.5-ounce) cans diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 (15-ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained and rinsed
 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
 1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium chicken stock
 1 (4.5-ounce) can chopped green chilies
 2 tablespoons chili powder
 1 tablespoon ground cumin
 1 teaspoon garlic or onion salt
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Pour the oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the chicken and brown for 2 minutes. Transfer to a lightly greased medium slow cooker and add the tomatoes and their juices, corn, beans, stock, chilies, chili powder, cumin, garlic salt, black pepper, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 5 to 6 hours. Serve warm.

VARIATION: To bump up the heat, add 2 small jalapeño peppers that have been seeded and chopped.

Stew Meat Chili

Who says ground beef has to hold the spotlight in beef chili? Stew meat is just as tasty and gives the chili a boost in elegance. This chili is guest worthy.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes
 1 ½ pounds beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
 2 (16-ounce) cans light red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
 1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
 2 cups tomato juice
 2 celery stalks, chopped
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 2 tablespoons chili powder
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 ½ teaspoon garlic salt

Coarsely chop the whole tomatoes and place in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the stew meat, beans, tomatoes and green chilies and their juices, tomato juice, celery,

onions, green peppers, chili powder, cumin, oregano, and garlic salt. Cover and cook on low for 9 hours or on high for 4 1/2 hours. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Add 1/2 teaspoon of cayenne pepper for heat lovers.

Hot and Spicy Chorizo and Beef Chili

Chorizo is a highly seasoned pork sausage that has become increasingly popular over the past few years. It pairs with beef to make a quickly pulled-together chili mixture that is exceptional.

Yield: 6 servings

1 pound ground beef
1/2 pound ground chorizo
2 (10-ounce) cans diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
1 (16-ounce) can chili beans in chili sauce
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
Hot sauce

Crumble the beef and chorizo in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Stir in the tomatoes and green chilies and their juices, beans, and cayenne, mixing well. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours. Skim off any excess fat. Serve warm with hot sauce.

Hominy and Chicken Chili

I love hominy and will find any reason to use it in recipes. It is a natural in chili thanks to the sturdy kernels, and I love it in combination with pinto beans.

Yield: 6 servings

1 1/2 pounds skinless boneless chicken thighs, cut in 1-inch pieces
1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
2 (15-ounce) cans white hominy, drained and rinsed
1 (15-ounce) can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
1 cup low-sodium chicken stock or beer
2 teaspoons chili powder
3/4 teaspoon onion salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon hot sauce
Chopped fresh cilantro for garnish

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the chicken, jalapeños, garlic, hominy, beans, stock, chili powder, onion salt, pepper, cumin, and hot sauce. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours. Serve warm with a garnish of cilantro.

VARIATION: Substitute drained and rinsed cans of yellow hominy for the white or use one can of each.

Tried and True Beef and Bean Chili

Traditional is always good to fall back on when you've experimented with lots of chili versions. This is inexpensive and truly does get better on day two!

Yield: 8 servings

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 1/2 pounds ground beef
1 large sweet onion, peeled and diced
1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped



★
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1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced
 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 2 (16-ounce) cans light red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
 1 cup low-sodium beef stock or beer
 2 tablespoons chili powder
 2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
 2 tablespoons tomato paste
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 1 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the beef and cook 5 minutes, breaking apart the meat with a spatula as it browns. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Stir in the onions, red peppers, jalapeños, tomatoes and their juices, beans, stock, chili powder, brown sugar, tomato paste, cumin, oregano, garlic salt, black pepper, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Add a teaspoon of hot sauce to the mixture either before or after cooking.

Thanksgiving Chili

This chili has all the makings of Thanksgiving in a bowl. Don't tell anyone it has pumpkin in it until they've all had a taste and realized how incredible it is.

Yield: 4 servings

1 pound ground turkey
 1 large shallot, peeled and chopped
 1 small yellow bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 1 (15-ounce) can solid-pack pumpkin

1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 (4.5-ounce) can diced green chilies, undrained
 4 1/2 teaspoons chili powder
 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 Sour cream for garnish
 Fresh snipped chives for garnish

Place the turkey in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook for 5 minutes, breaking apart the meat with a spatula as it cooks. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Stir in the shallots, yellow peppers, pumpkin, tomatoes and their juices, green chilies and their juices, chili powder, garlic salt, onion powder, and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Serve warm with a garnish of sour cream and chives.

VARIATION: If you're looking for another way to get rid of all that leftover turkey from Thanksgiving, substitute cooked shredded turkey for the ground turkey and add it halfway through the cooking time.

No Bean Chili

This chili was developed for my husband, who isn't a bean fan. The andouille sausages add just enough spice, but I like to have extra hot sauce on hand when serving it.

Yield: 8 servings

1 tablespoon vegetable or canola oil
 1 pound andouille sausage, sliced
 1 1/2 pounds beef stew meat, cut in 1-inch cubes
 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 2 cups low-sodium beef stock or beer

2 tablespoons chili powder
1 tablespoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon onion salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
Hot sauce

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the sausage and cook for 4 minutes. With a slotted spoon or tongs, transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the beef to the skillet and cook for 5 minutes, breaking apart the meat with a spatula as it browns. Drain and transfer to the slow cooker.

Stir in the garlic, tomatoes and their juices, stock, chili powder, cumin, onion salt, black pepper, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Serve warm with hot sauce.

VARIATION: Substitute any smoked sliced sausage for the andouille sausage.

Purple Hull and Pork Chili

I like to incorporate peas into lots of recipes, and chili is a natural fit. They take the place of beans and not only look beautiful but taste fantastic. You'll agree!

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

1 pound fresh or frozen purple hull peas
1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 orange bell pepper, seeded and chopped
3 ears sweet corn, kernels removed
1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced
1 (1-pound) pork tenderloin, cut in 1-inch dice
1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
1 (32-ounce) container low-sodium vegetable stock

1 (12-ounce) bottle beer or 1 1/2 cups low-sodium beef stock
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 green onion, sliced

Place the peas, onions, orange peppers, corn, jalapeños, pork, tomatoes and their juices, stock, beer, chili powder, cumin, garlic salt, black pepper, paprika, and cayenne in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Top with the green onions and serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute crowder or black-eyed peas for the purple hull variety if desired.

Meat Lovers Chili

My husband is a meat lover, and this chili was designed with him and those like him in mind. It came about because I decided to clean out my freezer and thawed several different meats in the process. Then I used my trusty slow cooker to give it all the love it needed to become dinner.

Yield: 10 servings

1 pound ground sausage, mild or spicy
1 pound ground pork
1 pound ground beef
1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 large green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced
1 (28-ounce) jar tomato sauce
1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained

- 1 (16-ounce) can dark red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup low-sodium beef stock
- 2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon hot sauce
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, brown the sausage, pork, and beef for 7 minutes, breaking apart the meat into pieces with a spatula as it cooks. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the onions, green peppers, jalapeños, tomato sauce, diced tomatoes and their juices, beans, stock, brown sugar, vinegar, chili powder, cumin, red pepper flakes, oregano, hot sauce, garlic salt, and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Add 1 (16-ounce) package of American cheese loaf that has been cubed halfway through the cooking process for a great party dip. Serve with sturdy chips.

Texas Chili with Tortilla Dumplings

When you make chili, you might as well make a lot of it because it only improves after it sits in the refrigerator. This Texas version has tortilla strips on top for a fun twist.

Yield: 8 servings

- 2 ½ pounds ground beef
- 1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 (16-ounce) cans light red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium beef stock
- 1 cup beer or additional low-sodium beef stock
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- 4 small (7-inch) tortillas, cut in strips

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, brown the beef for 5 minutes, breaking apart the meat with a spatula as it cooks. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the onions, green peppers, beans, tomatoes and their juices, stock, beer, chili powder, cumin, oregano, hot sauce, salt, black pepper, and garlic powder. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours. Add the tortilla strips and cook covered another 20 minutes. Serve warm with additional hot sauce if desired.

NOTE: Have a bowl of sour cream and some chopped green onion tops on hand for a nice garnish.



CHOCOLATE



Boatload Hot Chocolate
Chocolate Toffee Drops
Spiked Chocolate Fondue
Mellow German Chocolate Walnut Cake
Chocolate Puddin' Cake
Chocolate Pecan Bread Pudding
Celebration Day Hot Fudge Cake
Patience of a Saint Chocolate Custard

Boatload Hot Chocolate

My friend Jamie needed a boatload of hot chocolate for a school classroom party. This is the result of that request. It gets an A+!

Yield: 12 servings

4 ½ cups milk
3 cups half-and-half
1 cup nonfat dry milk
1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk
1 (12-ounce) package semisweet chocolate chips
1 (10-ounce) package milk chocolate chips
Miniature marshmallows

Whisk together the milk, half-and-half, dry milk, and evaporated milk in a medium slow cooker until smooth. Add the semisweet chocolate chips and the milk chocolate chips. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Halfway through the cooking time, whisk the mixture until smooth. Ladle into warm mugs, top with marshmallows, and serve.

Chocolate Toffee Drops

Yes, you can make candy in the slow cooker! And since candy-making time usually occurs during the holiday season, the slow cooker yet again comes to your rescue. Allow the mixture to melt away while you decorate and wrap gifts. Then just drop spoonfuls onto waxed paper and you've got a sugar fix to get you energized all over again.

Yield: 38 pieces

2 pounds white candy coating or almond bark, broken into pieces
1 (12-ounce) package semisweet chocolate chips
1 (4-ounce) chocolate bar, broken into pieces

1 (8-ounce) package toffee bits
1 ½ cups chopped pecans

Place the candy coating, chocolate chips, and chocolate pieces in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. Reduce the slow cooker heat to low and stir for the first time after 15 minutes. Continue cooking for 45 minutes and stir every 15 minutes. Add the toffee bits and pecans, stirring well. Drop tablespoons of the chocolate mixture onto baking sheets covered with waxed paper. Let cool completely and store in a tightly covered container.

Spiked Chocolate Fondue

Desperation leads to the best recipes! I needed a quick, easy adult recipe that was still fun for a holiday party, and this was the result. It's so delicious and will bring out the kid in everyone.

Yield: 10 servings

1 ½ cups semisweet chocolate chips
1 ½ cups white chocolate chips
1 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon Grand Marnier or peppermint schnapps
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Large marshmallows
Thick banana slices

Place the semisweet chocolate, white chocolate, cream, liqueur, and vanilla in a lightly greased mini or small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 1 hour. Stir well to combine and reduce the heat to warm. Serve with marshmallows and banana slices for dipping.



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Mellow German Chocolate Walnut Cake

Who doesn't love a luscious chocolate cake, but who can transport anything other than a sheet cake to family get-togethers? The solution is here, thanks to a recipe from my friend Helen. And you won't have any leftovers to transport back home thanks to the marshmallow topping.

Yield: 10 servings

- 1 (18.25-ounce) package German chocolate cake mix
- 1 (3.9-ounce) package instant chocolate pudding mix
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/3 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3 1/4 cups milk, divided
- 1 (5-ounce) package cook-and-serve chocolate pudding mix (not instant)
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup chopped toasted walnuts
- 1 1/2 cups miniature marshmallows

In a large bowl of an electric mixer, combine the cake mix, instant pudding mix, eggs, sour cream, butter, vanilla, and 1 1/4 cups of the milk. Beat at medium speed for 2 minutes until smooth. Transfer the batter to a lightly greased medium slow cooker.

Pour the remaining 2 cups of milk in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Heat until small bubbles appear along the edges, but the milk doesn't boil, around 4 minutes. Meanwhile, sprinkle the cook-and-serve pudding mix over the batter. Pour the warm milk on top. Cover and cook on low for 3 1/2 hours. Sprinkle the cake evenly with first the chocolate chips, then the walnuts,

and finally the marshmallows. Let stand uncovered for 15 minutes. Spoon into warm dessert bowls and serve.

Chocolate Puddin' Cake

In a snap, you'll have this recipe ready for the slow cooker, and in less than two hours, you've got a chocolate dessert that looks and tastes gourmet.

Yield: 14 servings

- 1 (3.9-ounce) package instant chocolate pudding and pie filling mix
- 3 cups milk
- 1 (18.25-ounce) package chocolate cake mix, plus ingredients to prepare the mix
- Freshly whipped cream

Pour the pudding mix and milk in a lightly greased medium slow cooker and whisk until smooth. Prepare the cake mix according to the package directions. Carefully pour the cake batter into the slow cooker, but do not stir. Cover and cook on high for 1 1/2 hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Turn off the slow cooker and uncover. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving warm with a dollop of freshly whipped cream.

Chocolate Pecan Bread Pudding

It began as a way for wise, frugal homemakers to utilize day-old bread. Even if you think your family doesn't particularly like bread pudding, let them try and resist this recipe for dessert.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

1 loaf sourdough or French bread cut into cubes
(14 cups)
6 eggs
4 cups milk
1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 cup white sugar
1/4 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup cocoa powder
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1/2 cup chopped pecans
Freshly whipped cream for garnish

Place the bread cubes in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a large bowl whisk together the eggs, milk, brown sugar, white sugar, cream, cocoa powder, and vanilla. Pour over the bread cubes, pressing down with a spatula to thoroughly soak the bread. Sprinkle the top evenly with the chocolate chips and pecans.

Cover and cook on high for 2 1/2 to 3 hours or until the pudding is set. Uncover and let stand for 10 minutes before serving warm with a dollop of freshly whipped cream.

Celebration Day Hot Fudge Cake

I was inspired to create this on National Hot Fudge Cake day and have decided that this should be a monthly designation. You'll agree!

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

1 (18-ounce) package brownie mix
1 1/4 cups water, divided
1/4 cup vegetable oil

2 eggs
1/2 cup chopped pecans or walnuts
1 cup chocolate syrup
Vanilla ice cream
10 to 12 maraschino cherries with stems attached

In a large bowl stir together the brownie mix, 1/4 cup of the water, oil, and eggs until smooth. Fold in the pecans. Transfer to a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Heat the remaining 1 cup of water in the microwave on high power for 45 seconds. Stir in the chocolate syrup and mix until well blended. Pour evenly over the cake mixture. Cover and cook on high for 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

Uncover and let stand for 30 minutes. Serve warm with scoops of vanilla ice cream and a garnish of a maraschino cherry on each serving.

Patience of a Saint Chocolate Custard

My grandmother made the best chocolate custard I have ever tasted. I had all but decided that I just didn't have the patience for it until I realized my slow cooker did!

Yield: 4 servings

6 eggs
4 cups half-and-half
2/3 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cocoa powder
1/2 teaspoon butter extract or pure maple extract
Pinch of salt
Chocolate shavings for garnish

Place the eggs, half-and-half, sugar, cocoa powder, butter extract, and salt in a blender

Chocolate

container. Puree until smooth. Pour into a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 2 1/2 hours or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.

Remove the slow cooker insert from the base and place on a wire cooling rack.

Let stand uncovered at room temperature for 1 hour. Place a piece of plastic wrap directly on top of the custard. Refrigerate at least 4 hours. Serve chilled with chocolate shavings as a garnish.

CORN



Golden Hominy and Beef Stew
“Oh My!” Bacon Corn Chowder
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Golden Hominy and Beef Stew

We grew up with hominy as a frequent side dish, and I still love it that way. But occasionally I like it dotting the landscape of a hearty beef stew.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 2 pounds boneless beef chuck, cut in large dice
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 3 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 3 celery stalks, sliced
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (4.5-ounce) can chopped green chilies
- 1 cup low-sodium beef stock, divided
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 (15.5-ounce) can yellow hominy, drained and rinsed

Line the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker with the mushrooms. Top with the beef and sprinkle evenly with the garlic salt, onion powder, and pepper. Layer the carrots, celery, tomatoes and their juices, and chilies on top. Reserve 3 tablespoons of the beef stock and add the rest to the slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 5 ½ to 6 hours.

Thirty minutes before you're ready to serve, combine the reserved stock with the cornstarch, stirring with a small whisk until smooth. Add to the slow cooker along with the hominy, stirring well. Cover and cook for 30 minutes. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Add a small peeled and chopped sweet onion and eliminate the onion powder.

"Oh My!" Bacon Corn Chowder

Sweet corn gets a spark from salty bacon in this Southern dish that is "oh my" good. Hide the extra bacon you are saving for the garnish or it will somehow disappear before serving time! This is based on lots of personal experience.

Yield: 8 servings

- 6 strips bacon
- 1 (15-ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 (14.75-ounce) can cream-style corn
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 1 ½ cups milk
- 1 ½ cups frozen hash brown potatoes
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- ¼ teaspoon hot sauce

Cook the bacon until crispy in a large skillet over medium heat, around 6 minutes. Drain on paper towels and crumble.

Place the whole kernel corn, cream-style corn, soup, milk, potatoes, half-and-half, parsley, onion powder, garlic salt, white pepper, and hot sauce in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Add half of the bacon to the slow cooker and reserve the remaining half. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Serve warm with a garnish of the remaining bacon.

VARIATION: Add ½ cup of finely shredded Cheddar cheese just before serving.

Winter Sweet Corn

Unless you planned ahead and home-canned or froze sweet corn in the heat of summer, you don't get to enjoy anything similar in the colder months . . . until now! I have conquered tasteless corn, and now you can enjoy what tastes like a summer harvest all year long. This got a thumbs-up from kids!

Yield: 8 servings

2 (16-ounce) packages frozen whole kernel corn
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, cubed
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup half-and-half or milk
2 tablespoons sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
Cracked black pepper for garnish

Place the frozen corn, cream cheese, half-and-half, sugar, and salt in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Stir well, garnish with pepper, and serve warm.

Laura's Creamed Corn Casserole

I think of my friend Laura every time I make this dish because she always liked to have it on her birthday. It is worth the celebration!

Yield: 8 servings

1 (15-ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained
1 (14.5-ounce) can creamed corn
1 (8-ounce) package cornbread mix
1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut in pieces
2 eggs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon onion powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon paprika

Place the whole kernel corn, creamed corn, cornbread mix, sour cream, butter, eggs, onion powder, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Stir well to blend. Sprinkle the top with paprika. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Uncover and let stand for 10 minutes before serving warm.

VARIATION: Instead of dusting the top with paprika, sprinkle $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of shredded sharp Cheddar cheese on the top before serving. Then leave uncovered and let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Corn Chowder with Shrimp

This chunky dinner is jam-packed full of flavorful sweet corn, a rich broth, and succulent shrimp. It is especially nice in the early spring when summer is just around the corner and you would like a taste of it now!

Yield: 6 servings

2 (16-ounce) bags frozen whole kernel corn
2 carrots, peeled and chopped
2 baking potatoes, peeled and chopped
1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
3 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1 (8-ounce) bottle clam juice
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry white wine or additional low-sodium vegetable stock
1 bay leaf
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
1 pound small or salad shrimp
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream, room temperature
1 tablespoon fresh snipped chives

Place the corn, carrots, potatoes, bell peppers, stock, clam juice, wine, bay leaf,



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garlic salt, and pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours.

Remove and discard the bay leaf. Using an immersion blender, pulse the soup just to slightly puree. Add the shrimp and cream and stir well. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes before serving warm with a garnish of chives.

VARIATION: For those who like it hot, add ½ teaspoon of cayenne pepper.

Bacon and Chive Creamed Corn

This recipe has become a welcomed family regular on our dinner table. It goes with anything and even kids gobble it up!

Yield: 8 servings

6 bacon slices
2 (16-ounce) bags frozen whole kernel corn
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, cubed
1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and chopped
½ cup half-and-half
1 teaspoon sugar
½ teaspoon garlic salt
¼ teaspoon white pepper
¼ cup chopped fresh chives, divided

Place the bacon in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes, turning halfway through. Drain on paper towels and reserve 2 tablespoons of the drippings. Crumble the bacon when cool enough to handle.

Add the drippings, corn, cream cheese, yellow peppers, half-and-half, sugar, garlic salt, and white pepper to a lightly

greased medium slow cooker. Stir in half the crumbled bacon. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Stir in the chives and let stand for 15 minutes. Stir and garnish with the remaining bacon. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped shallot or substitute it for the yellow pepper.

Corn and Lima Bean Succotash

The word *succotash* comes from an Indian word that means “boiled whole kernels of corn.” It is a mixture of corn, lima beans, and peppers, and I like to serve it with roasted turkey, chicken, or pork.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (16-ounce) bag frozen whole kernel corn
1 (15.25-ounce) can baby lima beans, drained and rinsed
1 small red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
¼ cup low-sodium vegetable stock
2 tablespoons half-and-half or milk
½ teaspoon onion powder
½ teaspoon garlic salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons bacon bits

Place the corn, lima beans, red peppers, stock, half-and-half, onion powder, garlic salt, and pepper in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Stir well and top with the bacon bits. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Add 1 large peeled and chopped shallot and eliminate the onion powder.



CORNBREAD



Giving Thanks Dressing
Welcome to the South Cornbread Dressing
Barely Spiced Cornbread
Pecan and Sausage Cornbread Dressing
Cornbread Cheddar Pudding
Fruitful Cornbread Dressing
Pimiento Cheese Spoonbread
Chicken and Dressing

Giving Thanks Dressing

The poor oven always has to work overtime at Thanksgiving and at most holiday dinners. Let the slow cooker come to your rescue by eliminating the need to add one more dish to the oven. This recipe can be served straight from the slow cooker!

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

- 1/2 pound ground hot pork sausage
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 cups sliced cremini or button mushrooms
- 1 cup sliced shitake mushrooms
- 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 Granny Smith or Braeburn apple, cored, peeled, and chopped
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- 4 cups seasoned stuffing cubes
- 1 1/2 cups crushed cornbread stuffing mix
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Place the sausage in a large skillet over medium heat and cook for 5 minutes, breaking apart the sausage with a spatula as it cooks. Drain on paper towels and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the butter and oil to the skillet. When hot, add the cremini and shitake mushrooms, onions, apples, and celery. Cook, stirring frequently, for 4 minutes. Transfer to the slow cooker, along with the stuffing cubes, stuffing mix, stock, pecans, parsley, sage, garlic salt, and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours, stirring after 1 1/2 hours. Serve warm.

Welcome to the South Cornbread Dressing

It is difficult to resist hot cornbread as soon as it comes out of the oven . . . unless you are getting ready to make this dressing. Get ready, turkey gravy, because here comes your buddy!

Yield: 14 servings

- 5 1/2 cups crumbled cornbread
- 1 (14-ounce) package herb stuffing mix
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup diced celery
- 4 eggs
- 1 tablespoon rubbed sage
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed

In a large bowl stir together the crumbled cornbread, stuffing mix, soup, stock, onions, celery, eggs, sage, and pepper. Transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Dot the top with the butter. Cover and cook on low for 5 to 6 hours or until set. Uncover and let rest 15 minutes before serving warm.

VARIATION: For a cheesy version, substitute a can of condensed Cheddar cheese soup for the mushroom variety.

Barely Spiced Cornbread

My husband is not a fan of extremely hot, spicy foods. Of course, I am! So our compromise is this irresistible, middle-of-the-road cornbread version that pleases us both.

Cornbread

Yield: 8 servings

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and divided
1 cup self-rising cornmeal
1 cup all-purpose flour
¼ teaspoon paprika
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon white pepper
1 cup buttermilk
2 eggs
1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese

Using a pastry brush, lightly coat the bottom and sides of a medium slow cooker with 1 tablespoon of the melted butter. In a medium bowl stir together the cornmeal, flour, paprika, cayenne, and white pepper. Make a well in the center and add the remaining 3 tablespoons of butter, buttermilk, eggs, and cheese. Stir until well blended. Transfer the batter to the slow cooker and spread evenly.

Fold a clean kitchen towel in half and lay over the top of the insert. Cover and allow the towel excess to hang over the sides. Cook on high for 1 ½ to 2 hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove the insert from the slow cooker base and let cool for 10 minutes. Loosen the sides of the cornbread with a rubber spatula and invert onto a cutting board. Cut into wedges and serve warm.

Pecan and Sausage Cornbread Dressing

I could make a meal on this dish. It has spicy (in my case!) sausage, crunchy pecans, and a moist cornbread base that tastes like the holidays.

Yield: 10 servings

1 pound pork sausage, mild or hot
3 celery stalks, chopped
1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
12 cups (9-inch pan) crumbled cornbread
1 cup chopped toasted pecans
2 eggs
2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
1 tablespoon dried sage
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
2 cups warm low-sodium vegetable stock, divided
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, cook the sausage for 5 minutes, breaking apart the sausage with a spatula as it cooks. Add the celery and onions and cook for 5 minutes longer.

Place the cornbread, pecans, eggs, parsley, sage, salt, and pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Do not drain the sausage mixture. Add to the slow cooker and stir until well blended. Add ½ cup of the warm stock to the sausage mixture. Stir well.

Pour the remaining 1 ½ cups stock into a small bowl and stir in the butter until melted. Pour over the dressing. Cover and cook on low for 3 to 4 hours. Serve warm.

Cornbread Cheddar Pudding

Creamy corn, mild chilies, and cheese give this cornbread a soft texture, yet it still holds its shape well. Serve it with a hearty green salad.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (14.75-ounce) can creamed corn

1 (4.5-ounce) can diced green chilies
 2 eggs
 3/4 cup plain cornmeal
 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 1 tablespoon sugar
 2 teaspoons baking powder
 3/4 teaspoon garlic or onion salt
 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

In a large bowl combine the corn, chilies, eggs, cornmeal, oil, sugar, baking powder, garlic salt, and white pepper. Transfer to a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 2 to 2 1/2 hours or until the center of the cornbread is set. Turn off the slow cooker and sprinkle with the cheese. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes before serving warm.

Fruitful Cornbread Dressing

Dried fruits are rehydrated in an herb dressing that eliminates the need to have cranberry sauce. I like using dried cranberries and apples for this dressing. If you have dried pears, feel free to substitute them for the apples.

Yield: 10 servings

1 1/2 cups dried chopped apples
 1/2 cup dried cranberries
 2 celery stalks, chopped
 1 sweet onion, peeled and diced
 4 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 1 (14-ounce) package cornbread stuffing
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
 1/2 teaspoon poultry seasoning
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme

Place the apples, cranberries, celery, onions, and stock in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Gently stir in the cornbread stuffing, parsley, poultry seasoning, pepper, and thyme. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. Reduce the heat to low and cook an additional 2 hours. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute dried cherries or golden raisins for the dried cranberries.

Pimiento Cheese Spoonbread

My husband doesn't know quite what to do with spoonbread. He hears the word *bread* and can't get it out of his mind. But this is a side dish he's learning to love with roasted chicken. And while you can eat it with a spoon, a fork is fine too!

Yield: 6 servings

4 eggs
 2 cups milk
 1 (2-ounce) jar diced pimientos, drained
 3/4 cup self-rising cornmeal
 1/4 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 1 teaspoon sugar
 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Whisk the eggs in a large bowl and add the milk, pimientos, cornmeal, cheese, butter, sugar, garlic salt, pepper, and cayenne. Whisk until well blended. Pour into a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 4 1/2 hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Serve warm.



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Chicken and Dressing

If you have a potluck that you're attending, carry this dish. It is exceptional, and I love how it satisfies both women and men. I keep the chicken chunks on the large side because my husband, George, prefers that, but you can chop them into a more dainty size if you like.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

1 recipe cornbread, cooked, cooled, and crumbled
 8 slices white loaf bread, crumbled
 1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 3 celery stalks, chopped
 1 small red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 2 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
 2 (10.75-ounce) cans condensed cream of chicken soup
 4 eggs
 4 to 5 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 1 ½ teaspoons poultry seasoning
 1 teaspoon garlic salt

1 teaspoon black pepper
 ¼ teaspoon ground sage
 3 cups chopped cooked chicken
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter

In a very large bowl, combine the cornbread, white bread, onions, celery, red peppers, and hard-boiled eggs.

In a separate large bowl, whisk together the soup, eggs, and 4 cups of the stock. Add the poultry seasoning, garlic salt, black pepper, and sage. Stir into the cornbread mixture, along with the chicken. If necessary, add the additional cup of stock.

Transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Dot with the butter. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours. Stir halfway through. Uncover during the last 30 minutes of cooking. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute turkey for the chicken and add ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper.





EGGPLANT



Summer Ratatouille
Summer Harvest Eggplant
Tomato Baked Eggplant
Eggplant Strata
Eggplant and Beef Stew

Summer Ratatouille

Serve your garden in a bowl with this healthy combination of vegetables. I like to serve it with crusty bread.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (1-pound) eggplant, peeled and cut in 1/2-inch cubes
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 sweet red bell peppers, seeded and cut in large dice
- 1 (10-ounce) package whole fresh mushrooms, quartered
- 2 large beefsteak tomatoes, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 3/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 yellow squash, trimmed and cut in 1/2-inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil

Place the eggplant in a colander and sprinkle with the salt. Let stand for 20 minutes. Place the eggplant, carrots, red peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes, tomato sauce, black pepper, garlic salt, and oregano in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours or on high for 3 hours. Add the squash during the last hour of cooking. Serve warm with a sprinkling of fresh basil.

Summer Harvest Eggplant

This recipe is like summer magic. It is loaded with fresh-from-the-garden vegetables and can be served on a bed of rice, noodles, couscous, or toasted slices of thick bread.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

- 1 large eggplant, cut in large dice
- 3 celery stalks, chopped
- 2 zucchini, thinly sliced
- 2 yellow squash, thinly sliced
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1/4 cup tomato sauce
- 1/4 cup low-sodium chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- Crumbled feta cheese for garnish

Place the eggplant, celery, zucchini, squash, and tomatoes and their juices in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a small bowl whisk together the tomato sauce, stock, vinegar, oil, sugar, oregano, garlic salt, onion powder, and pepper. Pour over the eggplant mixture. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Uncover and let stand for 10 minutes before serving with a garnish of feta cheese.

Tomato Baked Eggplant

I don't grow eggplant in my garden, but every year I vow to do so. This year I'm really going to do it because I love it with my homegrown tomatoes.

Yield: 4 to 5 servings

- 2 (3/4-pound each) eggplant, cut in large dice
- 1 large sweet onion, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 celery stalks, chopped



Summer Harvest Eggplant
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1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
3 tablespoons tomato sauce
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 teaspoon dried oregano
½ teaspoon garlic salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
Hot cooked noodles

Place the eggplant, onions, celery, tomatoes and their juices, and tomato sauce in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 3 ½ hours.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl stir together the vinegar, sugar, oil, oregano, garlic salt, and pepper. Gently stir into the eggplant mixture, cover, and cook for 30 to 45 minutes longer. Serve warm over hot cooked noodles.

Eggplant Strata

Think of this dish as a Southern vegetable garden version of lasagna. Instead of noodles, you've got layers of eggplant, spinach, and mushrooms. It's all held together with cheese and either your own home-canned or commercially prepared tomato sauce.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (28-ounce) jar tomato sauce
1 large eggplant, peeled and thinly sliced
1 (10-ounce) bag fresh baby spinach
1 (8-ounce) package sliced mushrooms
1 (15-ounce) container ricotta cheese
8 thin slices mozzarella cheese
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

Place ⅓ cup of the tomato sauce in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Top with a third of each of the eggplant slices, spinach, and mushrooms. Top with half of the ricotta and 4 slices of the mozzarella. Repeat with the remaining sauce, eggplant, spinach, mushrooms, ricotta, and cheese. On the top layer of vegetables, sprinkle with the cayenne, and then with the shredded cheese. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours. Uncover and let stand for 15 minutes before serving warm.

Eggplant and Beef Stew

There is hardly anything eggplant touches that it can't improve. Here it is nestled among chunks of beef, baby carrots, tomatoes, and Cajun spices for a bubbling hot feast!

Yield: 4 servings

3 pounds lean beef stew meat, cut in 1-inch cubes
1 large eggplant, cut in 1 ½-inch cubes
12 baby carrots
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
2 Roma tomatoes, chopped
1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
1 teaspoon Cajun seasoning
1 teaspoon dried thyme
½ teaspoon onion salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper

Place the beef, eggplant, carrots, garlic, tomatoes, tomato sauce, Cajun seasoning, thyme, onion salt, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Uncover and let stand for 10 minutes before serving warm.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped sweet onion to the mixture, then cook as directed.





EGGS



Vidalia Onion Crustless Quiche
Christmas Morning Brunch Casserole
Vegetable Soufflé
Bacon and Spinach Omelet
Maple Sausage and Cheese Strata
Blueberry Pecan Breakfast Casserole
Layered Kale and Egg Casserole

Vidalia Onion Crustless Quiche

Thank you, Georgia, for the gift of the mighty fine sweet onions called Vidalias. It may be the soil, the weather, or both, but whatever it is, I love the result. And this showcase of a crustless quiche is delicious. Just add a green salad or fruit for a light dinner.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
 4 sweet onions, peeled and thinly sliced
 6 eggs
 2 cups heavy cream
 1 cup shredded Romano or Parmesan cheese
 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 2 tablespoons sugar
 2 teaspoons baking powder
 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
 2 cups soft fresh bread crumbs
 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Place the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. When melted, add the onions and cook, stirring frequently, for 30 minutes or until the onions are caramelized.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl whisk the eggs for 1 minute. Add the cream and Romano and whisk until blended. In a small bowl stir together the flour, sugar, baking powder, seasoned salt, and white pepper. Whisk into the egg mixture until well combined.

Stir in the onions and bread crumbs. Transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 1/2 to 5 hours or until the center is set. Serve warm with a garnish of the parsley.

Christmas Morning Brunch Casserole

It's Christmas Eve, and you've been making last-minute preparations for the morning celebration. Let this casserole handle part of brunch for you. It bakes in just a couple of hours, but is prepared and ready simply to transfer from the refrigerator to the slow-cooker base the night before. Sleep well! Santa is on his way!

Yield: 6 servings

4 cups cubed day-old bread, divided
 6 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
 1/4 cup fresh chopped parsley
 2 Winesap or Rome Beauty apples, unpeeled and grated
 2 cups shredded Gouda cheese, divided
 6 eggs
 1 cup half-and-half
 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
 Fresh chives for garnish

Place 2 cups of the bread in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Put the bacon, parsley, apples, and 1 cup of the cheese on top. In a medium bowl whisk together the eggs, half-and-half, mustard, garlic salt, pepper, and thyme. Pour half of the egg mixture over the cheese. Evenly distribute the remaining 2 cups of the bread on top. Add the remaining egg mixture and gently push the bread into the liquid with a wooden spoon. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Place the slow cooker insert into the cooker base and cook on high for 2 to 2 1/2 hours. Turn off the heat and add the

remaining 1 cup of the cheese to the top. Cover and let stand for 10 minutes before serving warm with a garnish of fresh chives.

Vegetable Soufflé

I love light, fluffy eggs, and this recipe is guaranteed for success. You can easily change the vegetables to fit what you have lingering in your vegetable crisper drawer.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (12-ounce) jar roasted red bell peppers, drained and chopped
- 2 green onions
- 1 cup finely chopped broccoli or zucchini
- 1/2 cup chopped mushrooms
- 9 eggs
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1/4 cup half-and-half
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Place the peppers in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Chop the green onions and reserve 2 tablespoons of the green tops. Sprinkle the rest over the peppers and then top with the broccoli and the mushrooms.

In a large bowl whisk together the eggs, cheese, half-and-half, sour cream, garlic salt, and black pepper. Pour over the layered vegetables. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours or until the eggs have just set in the center. Turn off the heat and let stand for 10 minutes before serving warm.

Bacon and Spinach Omelet

It's true that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, but I frequently make this dish for dinner. I love it with a green salad.

Yield: 6 servings

- 6 eggs
- 6 slices thick-sliced bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 small sweet onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 (10-ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese, divided
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream or half-and-half
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika

Lightly grease a medium slow cooker. Add the eggs, bacon, onions, spinach, 1/2 cup of the cheese, cream, garlic salt, garlic powder, pepper, and paprika. Whisk until well blended. Cover and cook on low for 2 1/2 hours. Sprinkle with the remaining 1/2 cup of cheese, cover, and cook for 20 minutes longer. Slice into wedges and serve immediately.

NOTE: Do not overcook or the omelet will be dry.



*Blueberry Pecan
Breakfast Casserole
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Maple Sausage and Cheese Strata

This recipe feeds a crowd, and I love putting it on the night before company arrives the following morning. It's great for holiday house guests, making breakfast easy for the host and hostess.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

8 slices white sandwich bread, cubed
 3 cups frozen diced potatoes
 1 pound cooked maple flavored sausage, crumbled
 1 sweet onion, peeled and diced
 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 2 cups shredded Colby or sharp Cheddar cheese
 8 eggs
 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom
 or cream of celery soup
 2 cups half-and-half

In a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker, layer half the bread, potatoes, sausage, onions, green pepper, and cheese. Repeat the layers.

In a large bowl whisk together the eggs, soup, and half-and-half. Pour over the layers, pressing with a spatula to saturate the layers completely. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours or until the eggs are set. Serve warm.

NOTE: If you don't have maple sausage, use regular sausage and add 1 tablespoon of pure maple syrup to the egg mixture.

Blueberry Pecan Breakfast Casserole

Put the ingredients together for this dish around eleven in the morning. Let it sit in the refrigerator all day and evening. Then start cooking it when you go to bed. It will tickle your taste buds all night long!

Yield: 6 servings

1 loaf white sandwich bread, cut into cubes
 (12 cups)
 1 (8-ounce) container cream cheese, cut in small
 dice
 1 ½ cups blueberries
 1 cup coarsely chopped pecans
 12 eggs
 1 cup half-and-half
 ¼ cup pure maple syrup
 Pinch of salt

Place 4 cups of the bread cubes in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Layer with half of the cream cheese, blueberries, and pecans. Repeat the layers and top with the remaining 4 cups of bread cubes. Set aside.

In a large bowl whisk the eggs until well beaten. Add the half-and-half, syrup, and salt. Blend well and pour evenly over the bread cubes. Mash the mixture down with a large spatula. Cover and place the insert in the refrigerator for 12 hours.

Place the filled insert in the slow-cooker base. Cook on low for 6 to 7 hours. Serve warm with additional maple syrup if desired.

VARIATION: Substitute 2 cups of fresh blackberries or raspberries for the blueberries.

Layered Kale and Egg Casserole

If there was ever a time to pull out the slow cooker, it's when you need a kitchen assistant for breakfast when company arrives. This casserole calls for vitamin-packed cooked kale, but you can substitute spinach if necessary.

Yield: 8 servings

1 tablespoon unsalted butter
 2 large shallots, peeled and chopped
 2 (16-ounce) packages cooked frozen kale,
 thawed and squeezed dry
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 8 slices whole wheat or white sandwich bread, cubed
 6 eggs
 2 cups half-and-half
 1 teaspoon hot sauce
 1 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided

Place the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When melted, add the shallots and cook for 2 minutes. Add the kale and cayenne. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until the liquid has evaporated.

Place half the bread cubes in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a medium bowl whisk together the eggs, half-and-half, hot sauce, garlic salt, and white pepper until smooth and set aside. Top the bread cubes with half of the kale mixture and half of the Parmesan. Repeat the layers and pour the egg mixture over the top. With a spatula, press the mixture to make sure the bread is completely saturated. Cover and cook on low for 3 to 3 1/2 hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out nearly clean. Reduce the slow cooker temperature to warm and serve.

GREENS



Southern Kale Lasagna

A Mess of Greens

Slow Cooked Kale

Spinach and Chickpea Soup

Warm Spinach Dip

Soul Food Collard Rolls

Party of Four Creamed Spinach

Spiced Turnip Green Soup

Fall Turnip Greens

Southern Kale Lasagna

Kale loves to grow in warm climates and is a member of the cabbage family. It provides a bit of Southern charm to this beautifully layered lasagna.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) container cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 3/4 teaspoon black pepper, divided
- 2 (28-ounce) cans diced tomatoes, drained
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon onion salt
- 1 (16-ounce) package lasagna noodles, uncooked
- 4 cups kale, torn in large pieces
- 1 (12-ounce) package shredded mozzarella cheese

In a medium bowl stir together the cottage cheese, Parmesan, parsley, and 1/4 teaspoon of the pepper. Set aside. In a large bowl combine the remaining 1/2 teaspoon pepper, tomatoes, garlic, oregano, and onion salt.

Spoon 1/3 cup of the tomato mixture in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Top with a layer of noodles, breaking them to fit where necessary. Place half of the kale on top of the noodles and a third of the cottage cheese mixture on top in spoonfuls. Top with a third of the remaining tomato mixture and a third of the mozzarella. Add another layer of noodles and repeat twice. Cover and cook on low for 2 hours. Slice and serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute fresh baby spinach for the kale.

A Mess of Greens

They may not be very attractive, but cooked greens are full of nutrients and provide us that Southern elixir known as pot liquor. That cooking liquid is like gold, and cornbread is the standard for soppin' it up. These have just a small hint of sweetness thanks to the sorghum syrup.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 large bunch collard greens, washed, trimmed, and cut in 1-inch strips
- 1 large bunch turnip greens, washed, trimmed, and cut in 1-inch strips
- 1 medium sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 1/2 cups water or low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sorghum syrup
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, layer the collards, turnip greens, and onions. Pour the water over the top and drizzle with the vinegar and sorghum. Sprinkle evenly with the salt, black pepper, and red pepper flakes. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours or on high for 2 to 2 1/2 hours. Adjust the seasonings if desired. Serve hot.

VARIATION: Substitute mustard greens for the collard greens.

Slow-Cooked Kale

Although it has been popular in the South for decades, kale is finally catching on in other parts of the country. And while some

are making them into chips, I still prefer the old-timey way of cooking them down with the leftovers from a ham dinner.

Yield: 8 servings

1 ham hock
1 large bunch kale, ribs and stems removed
2 cups water
2 teaspoons white vinegar
1 teaspoon onion salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Place the ham hock in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Tear the kale into large pieces and add to the cooker. Pour in the water and vinegar and sprinkle evenly with the onion salt and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 3 hours. Serve hot.

VARIATION: Substitute fresh baby spinach for the kale. Replace 1 cup of the water with low-sodium chicken stock.

Spinach and Chickpea Soup

Popeye's favorite green is mine too, and I love the way it adds bits of flavor to this easy soup. It's a salad in soup form, so only bread is necessary to round out the meal.

Yield: 6 servings

2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut in large dice
1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1 cup water
1 1/2 cups cooked chopped ham or turkey
1 (14.5-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
3 cups chopped spinach
Grated Parmesan cheese for garnish

Place the sweet potatoes, red peppers, stock, water, ham, chickpeas, garlic salt, onion powder, black pepper, and thyme in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 3 hours or until potatoes are tender when pierced with a knife. Stir in the kale. Cover and cook on high an additional 15 minutes. Serve warm with a garnish of Parmesan.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped sweet onion and eliminate the onion powder.



Soul Food Collard Rolls
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Warm Spinach Dip

This cracker dip is a reliable party staple that rarely leaves you with leftovers. Serve it straight from the slow cooker, and the warm setting will keep it perfect throughout the entire celebration with no crusty edges.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

12 ounces cream cheese, softened
 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
 ¾ cup mayonnaise
 ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
 ¼ teaspoon onion salt
 ¼ teaspoon hot sauce
 1 (14-ounce) can artichoke hearts, drained and chopped
 1 (10-ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
 1 (2-ounce) can diced pimientos, drained
 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
 Assorted crackers

In a large bowl combine the cream cheese, Parmesan, mayonnaise, garlic powder, onion salt, and hot sauce with a hand mixer at medium speed. Fold in the artichoke hearts, spinach, and pimientos. Transfer to a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 1 ½ hours. Sprinkle the Monterey Jack cheese over the top, cover, and cook an additional 30 minutes. Reduce the heat setting to warm and serve with assorted crackers.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped shallot and substitute cayenne pepper for the hot sauce.

Soul Food Collard Rolls

Combine black-eyed peas, collard greens, and rice and you've got food that truly feeds my Southern soul. The greens are rolled up and held together with a zippy cheese.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

2 bunches collard greens, washed and trimmed
 2 (15.5-ounce) cans black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
 3 cups cooked wild rice
 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
 ½ teaspoon onion or garlic salt
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 ¼ teaspoon hot sauce
 1 ½ cups low-sodium vegetable stock

Bring a large Dutch oven half filled with water to a boil over high heat. When the water comes to a boil, add the collard greens. Turn off the heat, cover, and let stand for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl combine the peas, rice, cheese, onion salt, pepper, and hot sauce. Blend well and set aside. Lightly grease a medium or large slow cooker.

Drain the collards and transfer 12 of the largest leaves to a cutting board to cool. Place the remaining leaves in the bottom of the prepared slow cooker. Working with one collard leaf at a time, place ½ cup of the black-eyed pea mixture at the stem end. Fold in each side on the filling, then roll from the stem end to the leaf tip. Place the roll with the seam side down on top of the greens in the slow cooker. Repeat until all the leaves are rolled. Stack the rolls as needed. Add the stock to the slow cooker, cover, and cook on low for 3 hours or on high for 1 ½ hours. Serve warm.

Party of Four Creamed Spinach

I love cooked spinach just as much as I like it raw. This recipe appears to be enough for the neighborhood, but cooks down quickly to a side dish for four.

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 cup half-and-half
- 4 ounces cream cheese
- 1/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 (16-ounce) bags fresh baby spinach

Place the half-and-half, cream cheese, mozzarella, Parmesan, butter, cayenne, garlic salt, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 1 hour. Add one bag of the spinach, cover, and cook for 30 minutes (no need to stir). Add the remaining spinach and cook for 30 minutes more. Turn off the heat and let stand for 10 minutes. Stir well to combine and serve warm.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped shallot with the half-and-half mixture. Substitute fresh kale for the baby spinach.

Spiced Turnip Green Soup

I think part of the reason I'm so fond of turnip greens is because it likes spice. I do too, and this one has an appropriate amount of kick to give it pizzazz. It just needs wedges of hot cornbread as an accompaniment.

Yield: 5 to 6 servings

- 1 pound ground chorizo or hot Italian sausage
- 1 large shallot, peeled and chopped
- 4 large carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 (48-ounce) container low-sodium chicken stock
- 2 (15.5-ounce) cans black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 tablespoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- 2 (16-ounce) packages fresh turnip greens, washed and cut in strips
- Hot sauce

Place the sausage in a large skillet over medium heat and cook for 5 minutes, breaking it apart with a spatula as it cooks.

Place the shallots, carrots, stock, peas, tomatoes and their juices, red pepper flakes, garlic salt, black pepper, and onion powder in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Drain the sausage and add to the slow cooker, stirring well to blend. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Increase the slow cooker heat to high and add the turnip greens. Cover and cook for 1 1/2 hours longer. Serve warm with hot sauce on the side.

VARIATION: Substitute 2 equally sized cans of whole kernel corn for the black-eyed peas or use one can of each.

Fall Turnip Greens

I didn't really start liking turnip greens until I was in my late twenties, and I regret not giving them another try sooner than that. Now I not only grow them but crave them all year. My favorite time, though, is in the fall straight from my garden with just a nip of the first frost on the leaves.

Yield: 12 to 15 servings

1 (48-ounce) carton low-sodium chicken stock
1 (1-pound) ham hock
1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and chopped
1 teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
½ teaspoon baking soda
4 (16-ounce) packages turnip greens, washed and trimmed

Place the stock, ham hock, jalapeños, garlic salt, pepper, and baking soda in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add as many turnip greens as possible. Cover and cook on high for 45 minutes. Add remaining turnip greens. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours or until the greens are tender. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute collard or mustard greens for the turnip greens.

SHRIMP
FARMER
NEW MARKET, TN



Grits

LOCALLY
GROWN

All Natural
Stone Grits

KEEP REFRIGERATED AFTER OPENING
NO PRESERVATIVES
NET WT 3 LB (1.36 kg)



GRITS



Creamy Gouda Grits
Parmesan and Country Ham Grits
Creamed Grits
Dried Mushroom Grits
Breakfast Grits
Spicy Cheese Grits
Sausage Cheddar Grits
Hot Chicken Grits
Buttermilk Grits
Pimiento Cheese Grits
Round the Clock Shrimp and Grits



Parmesan and Country Ham Grits
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Creamy Gouda Grits

No brunch menu is complete without this Southern classic gracing the table. I like the nutty flavor Gouda gives this dish. You can substitute Edam cheese if you prefer.

Yield: 8 servings

5 cups low-sodium chicken stock
1 cup regular grits
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1 teaspoon garlic salt
¼ teaspoon white pepper
¼ cup sour cream
½ cup shredded Gouda cheese

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, stir together the stock, grits, butter, garlic salt, and white pepper. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours or on high for 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Stir in the sour cream and cheese until the cheese is completely melted. Serve immediately.

VARIATION: Add a seeded and chopped small orange or red bell pepper to the mixture before cooking.

Parmesan and Country Ham Grits

Little pieces of leftover country ham should never go to waste. Throw them into this mixture and you'll find reasons to have extra on hand!

Yield: 8 servings

8 cups water or low-sodium vegetable stock
2 cups regular grits
½ cup finely chopped country ham
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

¼ teaspoon black pepper
⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided
2 tablespoons sour cream

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, stir together the water, grits, ham, butter, pepper, and 1 tablespoon of the Parmesan. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours or on high for 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Stir in the remaining Parmesan and sour cream. Serve immediately.

VARIATION: Substitute 6 slices of chopped bacon for the ham and grated Asiago for the Parmesan cheese.

Creamed Grits

Add any toppings or additions you want to these creamy grits. They can serve as an anchor for meats in the evening or cheese in the morning. You pick!

Yield: 4 servings

3 cups half-and-half
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon white pepper
1 cup regular grits

Place the half-and-half, salt, and white pepper in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Whisk in the grits until well blended. Cover and cook on high for 1 ¼ to 1 ½ hours, stirring occasionally. Serve immediately.

VARIATION: Substitute an equal amount of polenta for the grits.

Dried Mushroom Grits

One of the best attributes of grits has to be that it is a canvas for showcasing lots of different ingredients. Dried mushrooms are in the spotlight here, which carry this dish to the dinner table instead of the breakfast table.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 cup regular grits
- 1/4 cup chopped dried mushrooms
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1/2 teaspoon onion salt
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 3 cups boiling low-sodium vegetable stock or water, divided
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon plain nonfat yogurt or sour cream

Lightly grease a medium slow cooker and add the grits, mushrooms, butter, onion salt, white pepper, and garlic powder. Gradually add the stock, whisking constantly to blend. Cover and cook on low for 2 to 3 hours. Stir in the Parmesan and yogurt and serve immediately.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped small sweet onion to the mixture before cooking.

Breakfast Grits

This recipe is simple and unassuming. It will perfectly match whatever other dishes you are serving, and it's an inexpensive way to break the fast.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

- 3 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon salt

- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 cup regular grits

Place the stock, salt, and white pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Whisk in the grits until well blended. Cover and cook on high for 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally. Serve immediately.

VARIATION: Add 1/2 cup of finely shredded Cheddar cheese to the mixture 15 minutes before serving.

Spicy Cheese Grits

Cheese fits into any menu as far as I'm concerned, and I love the creamy texture this recipe yields. Feel free to increase or decrease the spice level to meet the needs of your taste buds.

Yield: 6 servings

- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed Cheddar cheese soup
- 2 cups half-and-half
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon onion or garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce
- 2 cups regular grits

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, stir together the stock, soup, half-and-half, jalapeños, butter, onion salt, and hot sauce. Whisk in the grits until well blended. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours, stirring occasionally. Serve immediately.

VARIATION: Add 3 slices of chopped bacon to the stock mixture.

Sausage Cheddar Grits

One-pot meals appeal to me particularly in the morning. This is a winter Saturday morning wonder. It can be put on late the night before and will make you rise and shine early to get a head start on the day.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

1 pound pork sausage
5 cups low-sodium chicken stock
3 green onions, chopped
1 (4-ounce) can chopped green chilies
1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
½ teaspoon onion salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 cup regular grits
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, cook the sausage for 5 minutes or until done, breaking up the sausage into bits with the spatula as it cooks. Drain and add to a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Stir in the stock, onions, chilies, butter, onion salt, and pepper. Gradually add the grits and stir briskly to blend well. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours. Stir in the cheese until completely melted and serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute ½ cup of crumbled blue cheese for the Cheddar cheese.

Hot Chicken Grits

Hot chicken is popular in Nashville, but my favorite restaurant isn't always open. So what could I do but nestle something similar in creamy grits. High five!

Yield: 6 servings

4 cups low-sodium chicken stock
1 cup regular grits or polenta
1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced
½ teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon onion powder
¼ teaspoon paprika
¼ teaspoon black pepper
2 cups chopped cooked chicken
2 tablespoons hot sauce
¾ cup shredded Colby cheese
½ cup half-and-half, room temperature
2 tablespoons fresh snipped chives, divided

Place the stock, grits, jalapeños, garlic salt, cayenne, onion powder, paprika, and black pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Stir well to blend. Cover and cook on low for 3 ½ hours. Meanwhile, drizzle the chicken with the hot sauce and refrigerate.

Stir in the hot sauce-soaked chicken, cheese, half-and-half, and 1 tablespoon of the chives. Cover and cook an additional 30 to 45 minutes. Garnish with the remaining chives and serve warm.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped small sweet onion and eliminate the onion powder.

Buttermilk Grits

This recipe is life changing. I ended up creating it when I had buttermilk that needed to be used. It's remarkable, and the tang it gets from the buttermilk has now made this my favorite grits recipe.

Yield: 4 servings

2 cups buttermilk

- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup regular grits or polenta
- 1/2 cup shredded mozzarella or Swiss cheese

Place the buttermilk, water, salt, and pepper in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Whisk in the grits, cover, and cook on high for 1 hour. Stir in the cheese, cover, and cook an additional 15 to 20 minutes. Serve immediately.

Pimiento Cheese Grits

Dots of vibrant red pimientos and creamy cheese grits make a fine combination for breakfast, brunch, or dinner.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

- 6 cups half-and-half
- 2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 2 cups regular grits or polenta
- 1 1/2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, cubed
- 1 (4-ounce) jar diced pimientos, drained
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, place the half-and-half, stock, grits, Cheddar, cream cheese, pimientos, butter, garlic salt, pepper, and onion powder. Sprinkle the top evenly with the paprika. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Stir well and serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute a 5.2-ounce package of boursin cheese for the cream cheese.

Round the Clock Shrimp and Grits

This can be served in the evening or in the morning for brunch. I like it anytime of day and use already-cooked shrimp to make this even easier.

Yield: 6 servings

- 2 large shallots, peeled and chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 cup regular grits
- 1/2 cup chopped red bell pepper
- 1 (32-ounce) carton low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 (4.5-ounce) can chopped green chilies
- 1/2 teaspoon seafood seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1 (4-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup shredded Fontina cheese
- 30 cooked large shrimp, tails still attached
- 2 bacon slices, cooked and crumbled
- Chopped fresh chives for garnish

Place the shallots, garlic, grits, red peppers, stock, chilies, seafood seasoning, hot sauce, black pepper, and paprika in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Stir in cream cheese, and Fontina. Cover and cook 30 minutes longer. Serve in warmed bowls with 5 shrimp on top. Garnish with a sprinkling of bacon and chives.

VARIATION: Substitute 2 pounds of scallops for the shrimp.

HAM



Brown Sugar and Cola Ham
Maple Ham and Vegetables
Ham and Country Potato Casserole
Honey-Glazed Ham
Ham and Bean Dinner
Country Ham Polenta

Brown Sugar and Cola Ham

My parents gave me a cooked ham from Mississippi State, and this recipe was the result. I wanted to bypass the traditional pineapple rings and oven baking. I love the light sugar coating it receives, and the infusion of cola as it slow cooks is scrumptious.

Yield: 12 servings

- 1 (3 1/2-pound) fully cooked ham
- 1 (12-ounce) can cola
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar, divided
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Lightly score the top of the ham in a diamond pattern and place in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Pour off 4 ounces of the cola into a measuring cup and pour the remaining cola over the ham. Add 1/2 cup of the brown sugar, mustard, and pepper to the measuring cup and whisk until smooth. Pour over the ham. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. Press the remaining 1/2 cup brown sugar on top of the ham, reduce the heat to low, and cook an additional 7 hours.

Remove the ham from the cooking liquid and transfer to a cutting board with a liquid moat. Cover with aluminum foil and allow to rest 15 minutes. Turn the heat on the slow cooker to high and allow the cooking liquid to reduce uncovered while the ham rests.

Cut the ham in thick slices and transfer to a serving platter. Pour the cooking liquid over the top and serve warm.

Maple Ham and Vegetables

Pure maple syrup makes this combination of ham, and sweet potatoes sing. You can substitute honey or sorghum syrup if desired.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 sweet onion, cut in large wedges
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 2 large sweet potatoes, cut in wedges
- 1 1/2 pounds boneless cooked ham
- 1 cup maple syrup

Place the onions, celery, and potatoes in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Place the ham on top of the vegetables. Pour the syrup over the ham. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Transfer the ham to a cutting board and cover with aluminum foil for 10 minutes. Transfer the vegetables to a serving platter and drizzle with any cooking liquid. Cover to keep warm. Slice the ham and serve with the vegetables.

VARIATION: Substitute 8 small red new potatoes for the sweet potatoes.



Maple Ham and Vegetables
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Ham and Country Potato Casserole

I love casseroles, and those that are one-dish meals are my favorites. This is the recipe to pull out when you have leftover ham as well as potatoes coming in from the garden.

Yield: 6 servings

2 pounds golden potatoes, cut in 1-inch dice
 1 pound cubed cooked ham
 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 4 ounces cream cheese, cubed
 1 (8.5-ounce) can English peas, drained
 1/2 cup chopped green onions

Place the potatoes in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Top with the ham and spread with the soup. Sprinkle with the thyme and pepper. Cover and cook on high for 3 hours. Stir in the cheese, peas, and onions. Cover and cook for 30 minutes longer. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute an equal can of condensed Cheddar cheese soup or cream of celery soup for the cream of mushroom soup.

Honey-Glazed Ham

This is the recipe I use for my Easter ham. It comes out perfectly moist every single time, I don't have to turn on the oven, and it requires no basting.

Yield: 10 servings

1 (6- to 7-pound) bone-in ham
 1/4 cup honey
 1/4 cup cider vinegar
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
 1 teaspoon dried thyme
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Place the ham in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a small bowl whisk together the honey, vinegar, butter, brown sugar, Worcestershire, thyme, and pepper. Pour over the ham. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Turn off the slow cooker and let stand for 30 minutes. Transfer the ham to a cutting board with a liquid moat, slice, and serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute sorghum syrup for the honey.

Ham and Bean Dinner

Here in the South, ham and bean dinners are very popular. It's an inexpensive but exceptional way to entertain, particularly if you expect a crowd. This recipe lets you mingle with guests while the meal finishes. Get the fireplace ready!

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

1 pound country ham, chopped
12 baby carrots
2 (15-ounce) cans navy beans, drained and rinsed
3 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried thyme
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper

Place the ham, carrots, beans, stock, thyme, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute a large peeled and chopped sweet onion for the carrots.

Country Ham Polenta

The slow cooker could have been made for preparing polenta alone. It manages to keep it creamy and smooth without lumps or hardening as it cools down after it's transferred to a serving bowl. Salty pieces of country ham are the perfect topping.

Yield: 12 to 14 servings

6 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
6 cups water
3 cups polenta or coarse cornmeal
1 tablespoon garlic salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in pieces
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
3 cups cooked diced country ham

Place the stock, water, polenta, garlic salt, and pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. Stir and reduce the heat to low. Cover and cook for 4 to 5 hours. Stir in the butter and Parmesan and reduce the heat to warm. Serve topped with the diced country ham.

VARIATION: Add a large peeled and chopped shallot to the stock mixture. Substitute Asiago or Romano for the Parmesan cheese.



LAMB



Spring Lamb and Fresh Spinach Stew

Stout Lamb and Root Vegetable Stew

Spiced Lamb Stuffed Peppers

Rosemary Lamb Stew

Hands-Off Lamb and Vegetables

Honey Lemon Leg of Lamb

Veal Shank Stew

Lamb and Green Lentil Soup

Spring Lamb and Fresh Spinach Stew

Spring is interesting in the South. While days can warm beautifully, the nights are still frequently cool. That's why a warm stew using fresh garden spinach, just sprouted green onions, and delicious lamb is so nice in the evenings.

Yield: 6 servings

2 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup all-purpose flour
 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons onion salt, divided
 2 pounds lamb stew meat, cut into large cubes
 1 (8-ounce) package whole button mushrooms
 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, undrained
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour cream
 1 tablespoon paprika
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper
 1 cup packed baby spinach leaves
 Parmesan cheese shavings for garnish

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Place the flour and 1 teaspoon of the onion salt in a large zip-top bag. Add the lamb and shake to evenly coat. Shake off the excess and add the lamb, in batches if necessary, to the hot oil and cook for 8 minutes, turning to evenly brown.

Add the mushrooms, garlic, tomatoes and their juices, sour cream, paprika, the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of onion salt, and cayenne to a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Transfer the lamb, along with the pan drippings, to the slow cooker and stir gently to combine. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours. Fifteen minutes before serving, stir in the spinach. Garnish with the Parmesan and serve warm.

Stout Lamb and Root Vegetable Stew

Anytime you want to change the intensity of a stew, substitute beer for the liquid called for in the recipe. I love to cook this during the months of March and April when night fires are still necessary.

Yield: 6 servings

2 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup all-purpose flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic salt
 2 pounds lamb stew meat, cut in large cubes
 3 large potatoes, peeled and diced
 3 large carrots, peeled and sliced
 1 large sweet onion, peeled and cut in wedges
 2 cups dark beer or low-sodium beef stock
 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried thyme
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
 Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Place the flour and garlic salt in a large zip-top bag and add the lamb. Shake to evenly coat, then add to the hot oil. Cook for 8 minutes, turning to evenly brown.

Place the potatoes, carrots, onions, beer, seasoned salt, thyme, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Add the lamb and the pan drippings to the slow cooker and stir gently to combine. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours. Ladle into serving bowls and garnish with the parsley.

Spiced Lamb Stuffed Peppers

This recipe was developed out of necessity. I thought I had pulled out ground beef from the freezer to thaw for stuffed peppers, but I had mislabeled some ground lamb. I decided to use it anyway . . . what a terrific “mistake”!

Yield: 4 servings

1 tablespoon vegetable or canola oil
1 pound ground lamb
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 cup cooked rice
½ teaspoon ground coriander
½ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon chili powder
½ teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon white pepper
1 cup cooked English peas
4 large red bell peppers

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the lamb and cook for 7 minutes, breaking up the meat with a spatula as it cooks.

In a medium bowl combine the garlic, rice, coriander, cumin, chili powder, garlic salt, white pepper, and peas. Add the meat along with the pan drippings. Stir well to blend.

Remove and discard the tops of the red peppers along with the seeds. Spoon the meat mixture into the peppers, tightly stuffing. Transfer to a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours. Serve warm.

VARIATION: For fun, have each bell pepper a different color, utilizing orange, yellow, and green in addition to the red.

Rosemary Lamb Stew

Rosemary is one of the first herbs that springs back to life in my garden each April. It is a natural pairing with lamb and makes an elegant dinner.

Yield: 6 servings

2 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil
¾ cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
2 ½ pounds lamb stew meat, cut in large cubes
1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 cup dry red wine
1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, undrained
4 bacon slices, cooked and crumbled
2 sprigs fresh rosemary

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Place the flour and salt in a large zip-top bag and add the lamb, working in batches if necessary and shaking to evenly coat. Add the meat to the hot oil and cook for 7 minutes, turning to evenly brown.

With a slotted spoon, transfer the meat to a lightly greased slow cooker. Add the onions, garlic, and celery to the skillet and cook an additional 7 minutes. Add the wine and scrape up the bits on the bottom of the pan. Transfer to the slow cooker and add the tomatoes and their juices, bacon, and rosemary. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours. Remove and discard the rosemary. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute a peeled and chopped carrot for the celery.



*Honey Lemon Leg of Lamb
(page 167)*

Hands-Off Lamb and Vegetables

Hands-off cooking allows you to multitask with ease. This dish is marvelous over either hot noodles or rice.

Yield: 6 servings

12 baby carrots
 1 (16-ounce) package frozen green beans, thawed
 2 pounds lamb stew meat, cut in 1-inch cubes
 1 (15-ounce) chunky tomato sauce
 1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
 1 ½ cups low-sodium chicken stock
 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 tablespoon paprika
 Hot cooked noodles or rice

Place the carrots and beans in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Top with the lamb. In a large bowl combine the sauce, paste, stock, garlic, and paprika. Pour over the lamb. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Stir well and let rest 10 minutes before serving over hot cooked noodles or rice.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped sweet onion to the bottom of the slow cooker along with the carrots and beans.

Honey Lemon Leg of Lamb

My husband is not a fan of rosemary so I had to come up with a different seasoning for our springtime lamb feast. This one is so nice and moist, and the drippings can be used to make a knock-out gravy.

Yield: 8 servings



1 (3- to 3 ½-pound) leg of lamb
 ¼ cup honey
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
 1 teaspoon lemon zest
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 teaspoon black pepper

Place the lamb in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. In a small bowl combine the honey, lemon juice, mustard, lemon zest, salt, and pepper. Smear on top of the lamb. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours or until the lamb is fork-tender. Serve warm.

Veal Shank Stew

Long, slow cooking is a must for shanks in order for it to be transformed into a fall-off-the-bone tender cut of meat. This recipe doesn't disappoint, and I love the taste vegetables get from cooking in a luxurious broth.

Yield: 4 servings

6 new potatoes, quartered
3 carrots, peeled and sliced
1 large tomato, coarsely chopped
1 cup low-sodium chicken stock
1/4 cup low-sodium beef stock or dry red wine
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
4 veal shanks (about 4 pounds total)
1 (1-ounce) envelope dry onion soup mix
1/4 cup water
1/4 cup cornstarch

In a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker, place the potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, chicken stock, beef stock, lemon juice, parsley, garlic salt, and pepper. Place the veal on top and sprinkle with the onion soup mix. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours.

In a small bowl stir together the water and cornstarch until smooth. Remove the shanks to a serving platter and cover to keep warm. Stir the cornstarch mixture into the slow cooker. Let cook 10 minutes on high and serve warm with the veal.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped shallot to the potato mixture.

Lamb and Green Lentil Soup

This recipe is worth seeking out green lentils. You can find them at any supermarket that carries a large variety of bulk dried beans and peas.

Yield: 6 servings

1 pound ground lamb
1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
2 carrots, peeled and chopped
2 celery stalks, chopped
6 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1 1/2 cups green lentils
1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
1 tablespoon curry powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
Sour cream for garnish

In a large skillet over medium heat, brown the lamb, breaking up the meat with a spatula as it cooks. Cook for 5 minutes or until no longer pink.

Place the onions, garlic, carrots, celery, stock, lentils, tomatoes and their juices, curry powder, cumin, salt, and pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Drain and add the lamb to the slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours. Serve warm with a garnish of sour cream.

MACARONI AND CHEESE



Twisted Mac and Cheese

Elbows on the Table

Mac Attack with Cheese

Tomato-Speckled Macaroni and Cheese

Mushroom Macaroni and Cheese

Gruyere and Shrimp Macaroni and Cheese

French Onion Macaroni and Cheese

Ham It Up Macaroni and Cheese

Macaroni and Pimiento Cheese

Cheese Macaroni Soup

Twisted Mac and Cheese

The spiral pasta makes this dish a bit more memorable than elbow types. The dish is enhanced by bacon, making it extra appealing for adults.

Yield: 8 servings

2 cups uncooked rainbow mini-spirals pasta
10 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
2 cups shredded smoked mozzarella cheese
1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk
2 cups milk
2 eggs
1 teaspoon garlic or onion salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Place the pasta, bacon, Cheddar, and mozzarella in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a large bowl whisk together the evaporated milk, milk, eggs, garlic salt, pepper, Worcestershire, and cayenne. Pour over the pasta mixture. Cover and cook on high for 2 hours, stirring every 30 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 20 minutes longer. Serve warm.

Elbows on the Table

Cheers to the brilliant soul who was the first to combine elbow macaroni and cheese. It holds a place of honor among many, and I might well be at the front of the line.

Yield: 6 servings

6 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
1 (8-ounce) package processed American cheese
loaf, cut in small cubes
1 cup small curd cottage cheese
1 cup sour cream
2 eggs
1 teaspoon dry mustard
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon white pepper
⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon paprika

Place the water and salt in a large saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil and add the macaroni. Cook for 6 minutes. Meanwhile, in a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the Cheddar, cheese cubes, cottage cheese, sour cream, eggs, mustard, salt, white pepper, and cayenne. Drain the macaroni and immediately add to the slow cooker. Stir well until blended and evenly coated. Cover and cook on high for 2 hours. Serve warm with a dusting of the paprika.

VARIATION: Substitute shredded mozzarella for the sharp Cheddar.



Twisted Mac and Cheese
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Mac Attack with Cheese

I love the bread-crumb topping this version of macaroni brings to the table. It seems a little more grown up than those un-topped recipes, and I like the crunch.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

6 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
2 cups milk
1/2 teaspoon onion or garlic salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon paprika
1 (8-ounce) package processed American cheese
loaf, cut in small cubes
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 cup fresh bread crumbs

Place the water and salt in a large saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil and add the macaroni. Cook for 6 minutes. Meanwhile, in a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the milk, onion salt, pepper, and paprika. Scatter the cheese into the milk mixture. Drain the macaroni and immediately add to the slow cooker. Stir well to evenly blend. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours.

During the last 30 minutes of cooking, melt the butter in a medium skillet over medium heat. Stir in the bread crumbs and cook, stirring constantly, for 3 to 4 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool. Just before serving, sprinkle the bread crumbs over the top of the macaroni. Serve warm.

Tomato-Speckled Macaroni and Cheese

Sometimes you want macaroni and cheese to be a bit more complex than the ordinary version. This easy-to-prepare recipe does just that!

Yield: 6 servings

6 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
3 cups uncooked bowtie pasta
1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed Cheddar cheese soup
1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes and green
chilies, undrained
1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
1 cup milk
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese, divided

Place the water and salt in a large saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil and add the macaroni. Cook for 6 minutes. Meanwhile, in a lightly greased medium slow cooker, stir together the soup, tomatoes and green chilies and their juices, sour cream, milk, pepper, and 1/2 cup of the cheese. Drain the macaroni and immediately add to the slow cooker. Stir to blend. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Top with the remaining 1/2 cup of the cheese and let stand for 5 minutes before serving warm.

Mushroom Macaroni and Cheese

This vegetable version of macaroni is great when paired with roasted pork or chicken. I also love serving it with just a green salad.

Yield: 6 servings

6 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
1 ½ cups uncooked elbow macaroni
1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
1 (4.5-ounce) can sliced mushrooms, drained
1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
1 cup milk
¼ teaspoon garlic salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 ½ cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese, divided

Place the water and salt in a large saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil and add the macaroni. Cook for 6 minutes. Meanwhile, in a lightly greased medium slow cooker, stir together the soup, mushrooms, sour cream, milk, garlic salt, pepper, and 1 cup of the cheese. Drain the macaroni and immediately add to the slow cooker. Stir to blend. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Top with the remaining ½ cup of the cheese and let stand for 5 minutes before serving warm.

VARIATION: Substitute shredded Monterey Jack cheese for the sharp Cheddar.

Gruyere and Shrimp Macaroni and Cheese

The nutty flavor of Gruyere cheese adds just enough of a punch to this one-dish meal. I add more cayenne pepper to mine.

Yield: 6 servings

6 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
1 ½ cups uncooked elbow macaroni
1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of shrimp soup
1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
1 cup milk
½ teaspoon garlic or onion salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 ½ cups shredded Gruyere cheese, divided
1 cup cooked salad shrimp

Place the water and salt in a large saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil and add the macaroni. Cook for 6 minutes. Meanwhile, in a lightly greased medium slow cooker, stir together the soup, sour cream, milk, garlic salt, black pepper, cayenne, and 1 cup of the cheese. Drain the macaroni and immediately add to the slow cooker. Stir to blend. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Stir in the shrimp and top with the remaining ½ cup of the cheese. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving warm.

French Onion Macaroni and Cheese

This combination of French onion soup and creamy macaroni and cheese sings on a serving plate next to broiled or baked fish.

Yield: 6 servings

6 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
1 ½ cups uncooked elbow macaroni
1 tablespoon canola or vegetable oil
1 small sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 (10.5-ounce) can condensed French onion soup
1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
1 cup milk
½ teaspoon seasoned salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 ½ cups shredded mozzarella cheese, divided

Place the water and salt in a large saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil and add the macaroni. Cook for 6 minutes. Meanwhile, pour the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the onions and cook for 5 minutes until tender, stirring frequently.

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, stir together the soup, sour cream, milk, seasoned salt, pepper, and 1 cup of the cheese. Drain the macaroni and immediately add to the slow cooker, along with the onions. Stir to blend. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Top with the remaining ½ cup of the cheese and let stand for 5 minutes before serving warm.

Ham It Up Macaroni and Cheese

With leftover ham, the natural inclination is to throw it into a soup or toss it in a salad. Both of those options are great, but why not transform macaroni and cheese into a one-dish meal instead?

Yield: 8 servings

6 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
1 ½ cups uncooked elbow macaroni
3 cups diced cooked ham
1 (10-ounce) container refrigerated Alfredo sauce
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
2 cups half-and-half, divided
½ teaspoon white pepper
1 tablespoon cornstarch
Fresh snipped parsley for garnish

Place the water and salt in a large saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil and add the macaroni. Cook for 6 minutes, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, place the ham, Alfredo sauce, cheese, 1 ½ cups of the half-and-half, and white pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker and stir to combine.

Place the remaining ½ cup of the half-and-half in a small bowl and microwave on high power for 10 seconds. Whisk in the cornstarch, stirring until smooth. Add to the slow cooker and mix well.

Drain the macaroni and stir into the slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 3 ½ hours. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh parsley.

VARIATION: Substitute cooked diced chicken or turkey for the ham.

Macaroni and Pimiento Cheese

Glorious is how I describe this combination of two of my favorite foods. You will find that kids gobble this up like crazy. I do too!

Yield: 8 servings

6 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
1 (8-ounce) package processed American cheese
loaf, cut in small cubes
1 (4-ounce) jar diced pimientos, drained
2 cups milk
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
½ teaspoon onion or garlic salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon dry mustard
¼ teaspoon paprika

Place the water and salt in a large saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil and add the macaroni. Cook for 6 minutes. Meanwhile, in a lightly greased medium slow cooker, stir together the cheese, pimientos, milk, butter, onion salt, pepper, mustard, and paprika. Drain the pasta and immediately add to the slow cooker. Stir gently to blend. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Serve warm.

Cheese Macaroni Soup

I have had this recipe for so long, I don't even remember where I discovered it. I just know it tastes so good and is ready for me to enjoy on a weekend evening. If you want, add cooked cubed chicken or ham to the mixture when you begin cooking.

Yield: 6 servings

1 (16-ounce) package frozen mixed vegetables
3 cups low-sodium chicken stock
1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom
soup
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 (16-ounce) processed American cheese loaf, cubed
1 (20-ounce) frozen macaroni and cheese

Place the frozen mixed vegetables, stock, soup, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Add the cheese and frozen macaroni and cheese. Cover and cook for another 2 to 2 ½ hours. Serve warm.



MISCELLANEOUS



Hot Party Mix
Oyster Cracker Ranch Mix
Mulled Wine
It's All Good Warm Fruit Mocktail
Now This Is Banana Pudding
Cinnamon Bread Pudding
Candied Pecans
No Fire Bananas Foster
Homemade Stock
Caramel Sauce
Hot Buttered Rum
Barbecued Walnuts

Hot Party Mix

You might think this is the same old thing, but I had this at a holiday gathering served warm and it was so much better than the room-temperature version. Serve it straight from the slow cooker for a party treat. I use a mixture of different Chex cereals for this recipe.

Yield: 2 1/2 quarts

4 1/2 cups Chex cereal
 4 1/2 cups chow mein noodles
 1 (10-ounce) can whole cashews
 1 cup flaked coconut, toasted
 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
 2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
 2 teaspoons curry powder

Place the cereal, noodles, cashews, and coconut in a lightly greased large slow cooker and mix well. In a small bowl combine the butter, soy sauce, and curry powder. Drizzle over the cereal mixture, tossing to evenly coat. Cover and cook on low for 2 1/2 hours, gently stirring every 45 minutes. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute unsalted peanuts or pecans for the cashews.

Oyster Cracker Ranch Mix

I always have oyster crackers in my pantry to garnish soups. Here, I like them combined with pretzels and dry ranch dressing mix to create a party starter.

Yield: 9 cups

4 cups oyster crackers
 3 cups mini pretzels sticks

1 cup pistachio nuts
 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
 1 (1-ounce) package dry buttermilk ranch dressing mix
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 1/2 teaspoon onion powder

Place the oyster crackers, pretzels, and nuts in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Toss gently to combine and sprinkle with the Parmesan. In a small bowl combine the dressing mix, butter, and onion powder. Drizzle over the cracker mixture and toss gently to evenly coat. Cover and cook on low for 2 1/2 hours. Gently stir and serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute unsalted peanuts for the pistachio nuts.

Mulled Wine

Having a party on a budget can be challenging. This recipe lets you extend the welcome without overextending your pocketbook.

Yield: 12 servings

1 (750-milliliter) bottle dry or semidry white wine
 4 cups pomegranate juice
 3/4 cup sugar
 1 lemon, sliced thin
 1/2 cup pomegranate seeds

Place the wine, juice, sugar, and lemon slices in a medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 2 1/2 hours. Add the pomegranate seeds and serve warm.

It's All Good Warm Fruit Mocktail

Sunshine is frequently on my mind during cold weather, and this beverage is perfect for daydreaming about summer.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (10.5-ounce) can apricot nectar
4 cups pineapple juice
2 cups apple juice
½ cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 lemon or lime, thinly sliced
1 orange, thinly sliced

Stir together the nectar, pineapple juice, apple juice, and brown sugar in a medium slow cooker. Add the lemon and orange slices. Cover and cook on high for 3 hours. Serve in warm mugs.

VARIATION: Substitute peach nectar for the apricot.

Now This Is Banana Pudding

This is truly pudding, not the layered concoction that requires a trifle bowl. It is super easy to pull together and quite delicious at the end of a long day.

Yield: 6 servings

2 (14-ounce) cans sweetened condensed milk
4 bananas, pureed
¼ teaspoon banana extract
12 vanilla wafers

Place the condensed milk, bananas, and extract in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 2 ½

hours. Stir well and transfer to individual serving bowls. Let cool at room temperature for 30 minutes. Refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving with vanilla wafers.

Cinnamon Bread Pudding

If you like cinnamon rolls, you'll love this dessert. It gets just the right amount of flavoring from cinnamon raisin bread and will make your kitchen smell incredible.

Yield: 6 servings

10 slices cinnamon raisin bread, cubed
4 eggs
1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon rum extract or pure almond extract
Freshly whipped cream for garnish

Place the bread cubes in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a medium bowl whisk together the eggs, condensed milk, milk, and rum extract. Pour over the bread cubes and press down with a spatula to thoroughly soak the bread. Cover and cook on low for 2 ½ to 3 hours or until the pudding is set. Serve warm with a dollop of freshly whipped cream.

Candied Pecans

This could be the most addictive snack I have ever made. These nuts are equally terrific on salads or with freshly sliced peaches.

Yield: 4 cups

4 cups pecan halves
 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
 Pinch of salt

Place the pecans, brown sugar, butter, and salt in a lightly greased small or medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. Stir well and transfer in a single layer to waxed paper-lined baking sheets. Cool at least 30 minutes. Use immediately or store in an airtight container.

VARIATION: Substitute walnuts for the pecans.

No Fire Bananas Foster

One day I'm going to get really brave and light this dish before serving it, but not today, because flaming in a slow-cooker insert is never recommended! So I will rely on my trusty cooker to transform these ordinary ingredients into a masterpiece, with no fire in sight.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 1/4 cup unsalted butter
 2 tablespoons heavy cream
 1/4 cup dark rum
 1 teaspoon banana extract
 6 bananas, sliced diagonally into thick slices
 1/2 cup chopped pecans
 Vanilla ice cream

Place the brown sugar, butter, and cream in a lightly greased small or medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 20 minutes. Stir in the rum and banana extract. Add the bananas and gently toss to evenly coat. Sprinkle the top with the pecans. Cover and cook an additional hour. Serve warm over scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Homemade Stock

Put your slow cooker to work making what every good cook knows is a key to recipe success . . . homemade stock. I like to cook the mixture overnight. Then I just strain the next day and it's ready to use. Vary the meat bones to create either beef, turkey, ham, or chicken stock, or eliminate them completely for vegetable stock.

Yield: 5 to 5 1/2 cups

2 pounds meat bones (chicken, ribs, steak bones, ham hocks, etc.)
 6 cups water
 1 onion (any type), peeled and quartered
 2 carrots, halved
 2 celery stalk tops
 3 fresh herb sprigs (thyme, oregano, parsley, etc.)
 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon black peppercorns

Place the bones, water, onions, carrots, celery, herbs, vinegar, garlic salt, and peppercorns in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Uncover and let cool for 1 hour. Remove and discard the bones, onions, carrots, celery, and herbs. Strain the stock through a fine-mesh

colander. Discard any remaining solids. Use the stock immediately or you can refrigerate or freeze it for later use.

NOTE: If freezing, do so with pre-measured amounts. Write that amount on the label so you'll know exactly how much to thaw for use in recipes.

VARIATION: To make seafood stock, substitute shrimp shells for the meat bones and replace the vinegar with lemon juice. Eliminate the carrots and celery.

Caramel Sauce

This recipe is super easy and delicious, but should only be prepared in a mini slow cooker, which is around one quart in size. It's worth buying just for this recipe!

Yield: 2 1/2 cups

2 (14-ounce) cans sweetened condensed milk

Place the milk in a lightly greased mini slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or until the milk is caramel colored. Stir with a whisk every hour. Serve warm over ice cream or pour into a graham cracker crust and cool completely before serving.

Hot Buttered Rum

I didn't think I was much of a rum lover until I had this recipe at a holiday gathering. It can be made, kept warm, and served in the slow cooker.

Yield: 12 servings

8 cups water
2 cups firmly packed brown sugar
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut in pieces
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup dark rum
12 cinnamon sticks

Place the water, brown sugar, butter, ground cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves in a large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Stir in the rum and cook for 15 minutes longer. Serve warm with cinnamon sticks for stirring.

Barbecued Walnuts

This is one of my husband's favorite snacks. He usually reserves his prized barbecue dry rub for pork chops or chicken, but it adds a tangy zing to these walnuts. Substitute pecans if you wish.

Yield: 14 servings

3 pounds walnut halves
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
3 tablespoons barbecue dry rub

Place the walnuts in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Drizzle evenly with the butter and sprinkle with the dry rub. Toss to evenly coat. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours, stirring halfway through the cooking process. Serve warm, or cool to room temperature. Store leftovers in a tightly closed container.



PEACHES AND NECTARINES



Sugar and Spice Nectarines

Peach Brown Betty

Is It Done Yet Pecan Peach Cobbler

Walnut Peach Crisp

Dried Peach Pork Chops

Nectarine Chicken for Two

Dried Fruit Pomegranate Compote

Peaches in Brandy

Almond Nectarine Bread Pudding

Cinnamon Peach Rice Pudding

Tangy Peach Compote

Sugar and Spice Nectarines

You cannot believe how delicious this recipe is, and it's so versatile. It can be served over grilled pork or with vanilla ice cream. If you don't have nectarines, you can substitute fresh peaches.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

14 nectarines, peeled and sliced
2 cups water
1 cup sugar
1/3 cup lemon juice
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
4 strips (1/2-inch wide) orange zest
2 whole cloves
2 star anise
1 cinnamon stick, broken in half

Place the nectarines, water, sugar, lemon juice, and red pepper flakes in a lightly greased medium slow cooker and toss to evenly coat. Tie the zest, cloves, star anise, and cinnamon pieces in a piece of cheesecloth and add to the nectarines. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Remove and discard the cheesecloth packet. Stir well and let stand uncovered for at least 15 minutes before serving warm.

NOTE: Refrigerate leftovers and use within 1 week.

Peach Brown Betty

Going back to colonial times, Brown Betty was a popular dessert. While we usually think of them with apples, any densely textured fruit can be used. I love the sugared and spiced peaches used here.

Yield: 6 servings

4 cups sliced peeled fresh or frozen peaches
1/3 cup sugar
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon lemon juice
2 cups fresh bread crumbs
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/8 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
Vanilla ice cream

In a large bowl combine the peaches, sugar, flour, and lemon juice. Toss well. In a medium bowl stir together the bread crumbs, cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger. Drizzle with the butter and stir well to evenly coat.

Place half of the peach mixture in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Top with half of the bread crumb mixture and repeat. Place a folded clean kitchen towel over the top of the insert and cover. Allow the excess towel to hang over the edges. Cook on high for 3 hours. Turn off the slow cooker and uncover. Let stand for at least 45 minutes to set and thicken the fruit before serving warm with scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Is It Done Yet Pecan Peach Cobbler

Just as strawberries are married to shortcakes, peaches should be forever linked with cobbler. This will make your house smell incredible. You'll be hungry for it long before it's ready. Anticipation is fun!

Yield: 6 servings

4 cups fresh sliced peaches

1/2 cup white sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon, divided
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
2/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/8 teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in pieces
1/2 cup chopped pecans
Vanilla ice cream

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the peaches, white sugar, 1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon, and nutmeg. Set aside.

In a medium bowl combine the flour, brown sugar, salt, and the remaining 1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon. Cut the butter into the flour mixture with a pastry blender or two forks until chunky. Add the pecans and mix until crumbly. Sprinkle evenly over the peach mixture. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours or on high for 3 to 3 1/2 hours. Serve warm with scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Walnut Peach Crisp

I love the flavor walnuts lend to velvety peaches in this recipe. Top it off with ice cream and let it flow into the crisp.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

1 (21-ounce) can peach pie filling
1 (18.25-ounce) package yellow cake mix
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
1/3 cup chopped walnuts
Vanilla ice cream

Place the pie filling in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a medium bowl

combine the cake mix and butter. Spread evenly over the pie filling and top with the walnuts. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Turn off the slow cooker and uncover. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving warm with scoops of vanilla ice cream.

VARIATION: Substitute apple pie filling for the peach and chopped pecans for the walnuts.

Dried Peach Pork Chops

Versatile dried peaches are rehydrated in the slow cooker with apple juice to give this pork a kick of sweet. The cooking liquid is addictive!

Yield: 6 servings

2 tablespoons canola or vegetable oil
6 thick bone-in pork chops (2 1/2 pounds)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 large sweet onion, peeled and diced
1/4 teaspoon dried sage
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
3/4 cup chopped dried peaches
2 cups apple juice
1 bay leaf

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle the pork chops evenly with the salt and pepper. Add to the hot oil, in batches if necessary, and sear on both sides to brown, 1 minute on each side. Transfer to a lightly greased medium slow cooker.

Add the onions to the hot skillet and reduce the heat to medium. Cook, stirring frequently, for 3 minutes. Stir in the sage, garlic powder, peaches, and juice. Cook

for 5 minutes. Transfer to the slow cooker, scraping the skillet to release any browned bits. Add the bay leaf, cover, and cook on low for 3 1/2 hours. Remove and discard the bay leaf.

Transfer the pork chops to a serving platter and, with a slotted spoon, top with the fruit mixture. Transfer the cooking liquid to a gravy boat and serve warm with the pork.

Nectarine Chicken for Two

Straight from the tree to the slow cooker is the fate of my first ripe nectarines. This chicken glistens from the nectar. Serve it over rice or with a simple green salad.

Yield: 2 servings

1 tablespoon canola or vegetable oil
2 skinless boneless chicken breasts
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon black pepper
3 nectarines, peeled and sliced
1 shallot, peeled and thinly sliced
1/4 cup apricot nectar
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon curry powder
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon cornstarch

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Sprinkle the chicken evenly with the salt and pepper. Add to the skillet and lightly brown on each side for 2 minutes per side. Place the nectarines in a lightly greased small slow cooker, along with the shallots. Transfer the chicken

to the slow cooker and place on top of the nectarines.

In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the nectar, vinegar, cumin, curry powder, garlic powder, and cayenne. Shake to emulsify and pour over the chicken. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours or on high for 3 hours. Transfer the chicken to a serving platter and add the cornstarch to the sauce. Whisk briskly to blend and cook for 3 minutes. Spoon the sauce over the chicken and serve warm.

Dried Fruit Pomegranate Compote

By definition, compotes are slow cooked, and while typically chilled, this dried fruit mixture is served warm over scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Yield: 10 servings

2 (12-ounce) packages prunes, chopped
1 (7-ounce) package dried nectarines or apricots, chopped
1 (6-ounce) package dried peaches, chopped
1/2 cup dried cranberries or cherries
1/3 cup golden raisins
4 cups pomegranate juice
1 cup blush wine
1 tablespoon lemon zest
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Vanilla ice cream

In a large slow cooker, place the prunes, nectarines, peaches, cranberries, raisins, pomegranate juice, wine, lemon zest, and vanilla. Cover and cook on high for 4 hours. Uncover and let stand for 10 minutes before serving over scoops of vanilla ice cream.

Peaches in Brandy

This recipe is just the help that canned peaches need. It takes a bit of forethought to make sure it's ready when you are, but it's worth it. After slow cooking, the peaches are infused with brandy while nesting in the refrigerator. It's served cold, so make it for hot-weather dinners!

Yield: 8 servings

2 (15-ounce) cans peach slices, undrained
2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
2 (4-inch) cinnamon sticks
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon whole cloves
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup peach brandy
Freshly whipped cream for garnish

Place the peaches and their juices, brown sugar, vinegar, cinnamon sticks, and cloves in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Transfer to a shallow container and cool to room temperature. Stir in the brandy, cover, and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Remove and discard the cinnamon sticks and cloves. Serve cold with a garnish of freshly whipped cream.

Almond Nectarine Bread Pudding

Just a few tablespoons of orange liqueur infuse this bread pudding with such a nice flavor boost. You can substitute fresh peaches or even apricots for the nectarines if desired.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

8 cups sturdy bread cubes (1 medium loaf), divided
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pound chopped nectarines, divided
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup almonds, toasted and divided
6 eggs
2 egg yolks
1 cup sugar
3 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups half-and-half
3 tablespoons orange juice or orange liqueur
1 teaspoon pure almond extract
Freshly whipped cream

Place 4 cups of the bread cubes in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Top with half of the nectarines and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the almonds.

In a large bowl whisk together the eggs, egg yolks, sugar, half-and-half, orange juice, and almond extract until well blended. Pour half of the custard mixture into the slow cooker. Add the remaining 4 cups of the bread cubes, nectarines, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the almonds, then top with the remaining custard. Press gently with a spatula to submerge the bread cubes completely.

Cover and cook on high for $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Let rest for 10 minutes uncovered before serving warm with a garnish of whipped cream.



Cinnamon Peach Rice Pudding
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Cinnamon Peach Rice Pudding

Dried fruits are a cook's dream. They take up only a bit of space in the pantry and rehydrate easily in the slow cooker to become soft and mellow. This is a great way to use up leftover cooked rice.

Yield: 6 servings

5 eggs
2 cups heavy cream
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 cups cooked white rice
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped dried peaches
Freshly whipped cream for garnish

In a large bowl whisk the eggs until lightly beaten. Add the cream, sugar, vanilla, and cinnamon, whisking until smooth. Stir in the rice and peaches and transfer to a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 3 to 4 hours or until the liquid is absorbed. Stir well and serve with a garnish of whipped cream.

NOTE: Dried peaches are easily chopped with kitchen shears.

Tangy Peach Compote

Compotes must be slowly cooked in order for the fruits to maintain their shape. It can be served warm over grilled meat or over slices of toasted pound cake.

Yield: 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups

2 pounds fresh peaches, peeled, seeded, and chopped
1 (20-ounce) can crushed pineapple, undrained
1 (8.5-ounce) can mandarin oranges, undrained
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped dried peaches
2 cinnamon sticks

Place the fresh peaches, pineapple and their juices, oranges and their juices, sugar, dried peaches, and cinnamon sticks in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours, stirring occasionally. Uncover and let stand for at least 30 minutes before using or cool completely. Refrigerate leftovers.



★
Caramelized Pears
(page 192)

PEARS



Caramelized Pears
Wine-Poached Pears
Fresh Pear Butter
Fall Fruit Compote
Pear Bread Pudding
Cinnamon Ginger Pears
Camembert and Pear Soup
Honey Glazed Pears and Apples

Caramelized Pears

Warm buttery pears take on a custard-like texture in this heavenly fall dish. A small scoop of vanilla ice cream transforms it into a pie without the crust.

Yield: 8 servings

4 large pears
1 tablespoon lemon juice
¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
⅛ teaspoon salt
½ cup chopped pecans or walnuts
½ cup pear nectar
3 tablespoons honey
Vanilla ice cream

Cut the pears in half lengthwise and remove the cores. Brush the cut edges with the lemon juice to prevent browning and set aside.

In a small bowl combine the brown sugar, butter, flour, cinnamon, salt, and pecans. Spoon into the core of the pears and place in a single layer in a lightly greased medium slow cooker with the stuffed side up.

Pour the nectar and honey in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Shake to emulsify and drizzle evenly over the pears. Cover and cook on low for 2 ½ hours. Serve warm with a scoop of vanilla ice cream. Spoon extra warm nectar over the top of the ice cream.

Wine-Poached Pears

Here's an extravagant-looking dessert that will fill your home with the most intoxicating

aroma. It is such a nice ending for a special-occasion meal.

Yield: 4 servings

2 ½ cups dry red wine
¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
Zest of ½ orange
1 cinnamon stick
3 whole cloves
2 whole allspice
4 large pears, cut in half and cored

Place the wine and brown sugar in a lightly greased medium slow cooker and gently whisk until the sugar dissolves. Add the zest, cinnamon stick, cloves, and allspice. Add the pears with the cut sides down and arrange so that the cut ends are submerged as much as possible. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Halfway through the cooking time, baste any exposed areas with the cooking liquid. Uncover and let rest for 5 minutes before serving with a drizzle of the warm cooking liquid.

NON-ALCOHOLIC VARIATION: Omit the wine, sugar, cinnamon, cloves, and allspice. Poach the cut pears in 2 (12-ounce) bottles of root beer and substitute the zest of 1 lemon for the orange.

Fresh Pear Butter

Every year I hit the pear jackpot in the fall. My neighbor has a really old pear tree that is always loaded with fruit, and I get to harvest all I want. For that reason, I stop making apple butter as soon as the pear season begins. Canned pear nectar can be found in the juice aisle of the supermarket.

Yield: 4 cups

2 pounds (around 8) pears, cored, peeled, and cut into large dice
 1 cup pear nectar
 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
 1 tablespoon pear brandy, optional

Place the pears in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Add the nectar, brown sugar, cinnamon, allspice, cloves, ginger, and brandy if using. Stir to evenly coat the pears. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours, stirring occasionally. The mixture should be thick. Uncover and use a potato masher to crush the pears. Cook uncovered an additional 30 minutes. Using an immersion blender, puree the mixture for 1 minute or until smooth. Serve warm, room temperature, or cold.

NOTE: If you do not have an immersion blender, allow the pear butter to cool to room temperature and puree it until smooth in a blender.

STORAGE NOTE: Store in the refrigerator and use within 2 weeks or in the freezer and use within 3 months.

Fall Fruit Compote

Juice-filled pears are cooked with luscious summer and fall dried fruits to give you a lovely topping for everything from cake to ice cream, hot cereal, waffles, pancakes, and grilled pork.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

2 cups hot water
 1 1/3 cups sugar
 3/4 cup pear nectar or dry white wine
 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
 1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 4 large pears, cored, peeled, and cut in large dice
 1 1/2 cups dried peaches, nectarines, or apricots
 1 cup dried cranberries

Lightly grease a medium or large slow cooker and add the hot water, sugar, nectar, and lemon zest. Stir until the sugar dissolves. Add the vanilla, pears, peaches, and cranberries and stir until blended. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Serve warm or at room temperature.

STORAGE NOTE: Refrigerate leftovers and use within 2 weeks.

Pear Bread Pudding

The beauty of bread pudding is that you can put it all together in advance. This one is no exception and needs four hours of refrigeration to get it jump-started. So start it in the morning and it will be ready to cook for three hours before dinner. You'll have a winner for the end of the evening.

Yield: 6 servings

3 eggs
1 cup milk
1/3 cup heavy cream
4 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar, divided
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
6 slices white bread
1/3 cup orange marmalade
3 pears, cored, peeled, and chopped
Freshly whipped cream for garnish

In a medium bowl whisk together the eggs, milk, cream, 2 tablespoons of the brown sugar, cinnamon, and ginger until smooth. Set aside.

Butter each bread slice with 1/2 tablespoon of butter on one side. Spread the marmalade evenly over the butter. Arrange the slices in a lightly greased medium slow cooker, overlapping as necessary. Pour half of the cream mixture over the bread and sprinkle evenly with the pears. Pour the remaining cream mixture over the top and use a wooden spoon to make sure all the bread is completely covered with liquid. Sprinkle the remaining 2 tablespoons of brown sugar evenly over the top. Cover and refrigerate for 4 hours.

Place the insert in the slow cooker base,

cover, and cook on high for 2 1/2 to 3 hours or until a tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Serve warm with a garnish of freshly whipped cream.

Cinnamon Ginger Pears

Fresh ginger changes everything it touches. This gnarly unique root gives fresh mellow pears a spicy edge.

Yield: 6 servings

3 cups water
1 cup sugar
8 slices fresh ginger
2 cinnamon sticks
6 pears, cored and peeled

Place the water, sugar, ginger, and cinnamon in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Stir to blend. Place the pears, sitting upright, in the sugar syrup. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours or on high for 2 hours. Remove the pears from the syrup and let them cool. Turn the slow cooker heat to high and allow the syrup to cook uncovered for 30 minutes to thicken. Drizzle with the reduced syrup and serve.

Camembert and Pear Soup

I love the sophistication of this appetizer or meal-starter soup. The salty cheese with sweet pears keeps it light and elegant.

Yield: 8 appetizer servings

- 4 large ripe pears, cored, peeled, and cut into large chunks
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh sage
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper
- 1 (8-ounce) package creamy Camembert, cut in small chunks
- Small fresh sage leaves for garnish

Toss the pears with the lemon juice and place in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Add the stock, chopped sage, and white pepper. Cover and cook on low for 5 to 5 ½ hours. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Add the cheese, cover, and cook 1 hour longer. Stir well and serve warm with a garnish of fresh sage.

Honey Glazed Pears and Apples

This recipe marries two of my favorite fall fruits and is a terrific meal ender. You can serve it without the suggestion of vanilla ice cream, but it is perfection when spooned over large scoops. You can also make this recipe with just pears or just apples.

Yield: 8 to 9 servings

- 4 large Anjou pears, peeled, cored, and cut into 6 wedges
- 3 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and cut into 8 wedges
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ cup honey
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- Vanilla ice cream

Place the pears and apples in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Sprinkle with the lemon juice. In a small bowl stir together the brown sugar, flour, and cinnamon. Sprinkle over the pears and apples, tossing gently to evenly coat. Drizzle with the honey and butter. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Remove the lid and stir. Allow to stand uncovered for 10 minutes. Serve warm over scoops of vanilla ice cream.

NOTE: Refrigerate any leftovers and use within 3 days. Gently reheat in the microwave on low power for 10 to 20 seconds.



PEAS



New Year's Day Soup
Yellow Split Pea and Sausage Stew
Split Pea and Beef Stew
Split Pea and Ham Soup
Black-Eyed Peas and Greens
Hoppin' John
Just Peas Please
Smoked Pea Soup
Rice and English Pea Soup

New Year's Day Soup

Who wants to take the chance that luck might not be on your side? Not me! This Southern combination will become more than a once-a-year meal. Plan ahead to allow for the dried peas to have adequate soaking time.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

- 1 (16-ounce) package dried black-eyed peas
- 8 bacon slices
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 (4.5-ounce) jar sliced mushrooms, drained
- 1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 (48-ounce) container low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 ½ cups chopped fresh spinach

Place the peas in a large Dutch oven and cover with water. Cover and let stand overnight in the refrigerator. Meanwhile, cook the bacon in a large skillet over medium heat for 5 minutes or until crisp. Drain on paper towels and crumble.

Add the garlic and red peppers to the pan drippings. Cook 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Transfer to a covered bowl and add the mushrooms, tomatoes and green chilies and their juices, black pepper, red pepper flakes, and top with the crumbled bacon. Refrigerate overnight.

Drain the peas and discard the soaking liquid. Place the peas in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the refrigerated tomato mixture, along with the stock. Cover and cook on high for 10 hours or until the peas are tender. Stir in the spinach during the last 30 minutes of cooking. Serve warm.

Yellow Split Pea and Sausage Stew

Split peas got their name because the peas are dried and then divided along their natural seam. The most common color is green, but yellow ones are just as tasty and a bit more unique. I like to use spicy sausage in this stew, but tailor it to fit your family's taste buds.

Yield: 6 servings

- 5 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 3 celery stalks, chopped
- 3 carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 red onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 cups andouille sausage, diced
- 2 cups yellow split peas
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- Fresh cilantro leaves

Place the stock, celery, carrots, onions, sausage, peas, parsley, bay leaf, garlic salt, thyme, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Serve warm with a garnish of cilantro.

VARIATION: For a less pronounced onion flavor, substitute a chopped leek for the red onion.



*Yellow Split Pea and
Sausage Stew
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Split Pea and Beef Stew

Both green and yellow split peas are used to make this unforgettable stew that includes raisins! Shhh! It's our little secret!

Yield: 8 servings

2 pounds beef stew meat, cut in 2-inch cubes
 2 leeks, chopped
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 3 bay leaves
 5 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 1 cup green split peas
 1/2 cup yellow split peas
 1/4 cup golden raisins
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Place the beef, leeks, onions, bay leaves, stock, green split peas, yellow split peas, raisins, lemon juice, cumin, oregano, garlic salt, and pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours. Remove and discard the bay leaves. Serve warm.

Split Pea and Ham Soup

I adore the combination of green split peas and ham. This soup is layered in the slow cooker without stirring. It begs for hot cornbread when served.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (16-ounce) package green split peas
 2 1/2 cups cooked diced ham
 3 carrots, peeled and sliced

2 large shallots, peeled and diced
 2 celery stalks, diced
 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
 1 tablespoon garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 1 bay leaf
 6 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 Freshly shredded Parmesan cheese

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, layer the peas, ham, carrots, shallots, celery, and parsley. Sprinkle evenly with the garlic salt and pepper. Add the bay leaf and pour the stock over the top. Do not stir. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 4 hours. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Stir and serve warm with a garnish of Parmesan.

Black-Eyed Peas and Greens

This looks like something my grandmother would make, which means I automatically like it. Black-eyed peas are my favorite of the entire pea family, and by adding spunky collard greens, you have a terrific one-dish meal. Add crumbled cornbread to the servings, if you like, for a bit of old-fashioned fun.

Yield: 6 servings

1 1/2 cups dried black-eyed peas
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 2 celery stalks, chopped
 1 small green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced
 4 cups collard greens (1/2 bunch), washed, shaken dry, and cut in strips
 4 cups water or low-sodium vegetable stock
 1 tablespoon Creole seasoning
 1 bay leaf

½ teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
½ teaspoon hot sauce

Place the peas in a large pot of water and let soak overnight in the refrigerator. Drain the peas and discard the soaking water. Layer the peas, onions, celery, green peppers, jalapeños, and collards in a lightly greased large slow cooker.

In a large bowl combine the water, Creole seasoning, bay leaf, garlic salt, black pepper, and hot sauce. Pour over the layers. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours or on high for 3 ½ hours or until the peas are tender. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Serve warm with additional hot sauce, if desired.

VARIATION: Substitute turnip or mustard greens for the collards.

Hoppin' John

If you've ever been around me when I am feeling a bit puny, you'll know that this Southern classic is my "make me feel better" dish. And it does, along with flavorful ribbons of garden-fresh kale that your family will love. Any leftovers freeze very well.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

2 (15.5-ounce) cans black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1 bunch kale, washed and chopped
½ teaspoon garlic salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

1 (6-ounce) package long-grain rice
Hot sauce

Place the peas, tomatoes and green chilies and their juices, stock, kale, garlic salt, black pepper, and cayenne in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Stir in the rice and cook 1 ½ hours longer. Serve warm with hot sauce.

Just Peas Please

This simple recipe can be adapted to any variety of fresh or frozen peas you have. I have tried it with black eyes, purple hulls, lady peas, and crowders. All are delicious!

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

2 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil
1 small red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
4 cups fresh or frozen peas
3 ½ cups low-sodium vegetable stock
½ teaspoon onion salt
½ teaspoon hot sauce
¼ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon paprika

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the red peppers and cook, stirring frequently, for 1 minute.

Place the peas, stock, onion salt, hot sauce, black pepper, garlic powder, and paprika in a lightly greased small or medium slow cooker. Add the red peppers and drippings, stirring well. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours or until the peas are tender. Serve warm.

Smoked Pea Soup

Combine country ham and liquid smoke and you've got the perfect seasoning for this pea-based soup. Make it spicy, if you want, with additional hot sauce.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 large ham hock
- 4 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 2 (15.5-ounce) cans black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 2 (32-ounce) cartons low-sodium vegetable or chicken stock
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon liquid smoke
- ½ teaspoon onion salt
- ½ teaspoon hot sauce
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

Place the ham hock, carrots, celery, peas, stock, bay leaf, thyme, liquid smoke, onion salt, hot sauce, garlic powder, pepper, and paprika in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours or 3 ½ hours on high. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Garnish with parsley and serve warm.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped sweet onion or 2 chopped leeks.

Rice and English Pea Soup

Early season peas are terrifically sweet, and they deserve a chance to be in the spotlight. Early fresh parsley from the herb garden is also a star.

Yield: 6 servings

- 12 baby carrots
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 (16-ounce) package frozen English peas
- 1 (48-ounce) carton low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 cup Arborio rice
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ⅓ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup heavy cream, room temperature

Place the carrots, garlic, peas, stock, rice, parsley, salt, white pepper, and cayenne in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 3 to 4 hours. Stir in the Parmesan and cream. Cover and cook for 30 minutes longer. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute a peeled and chopped sweet onion for the baby carrots.





PEPPERS



Vegetable Stuffed Peppers

Vegetable Garden Gumbo

Red Bell Pepper Sauce

Beef-Stuffed Red Peppers

Pepper Steak

Roasted Bell Pepper Soup

Pepper-Speckled Polenta

Vegetable Stuffed Peppers

I grow bell peppers in my garden, but still never seem to have enough of them. It's probably because I crave this dish too often and the plants can't keep up! Vary the beans called for to fit what you already have in your pantry.

Yield: 6 servings

6 large red, orange, or yellow bell peppers
2 cups cooked wild or brown rice
3 Roma tomatoes, diced
1 cup fresh, frozen, or canned whole kernel or shoepeg corn
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup canned or cooked black beans
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
2 tablespoons chopped black olives
1 teaspoon onion salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup spaghetti sauce
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup low-sodium vegetable stock or water
2 tablespoons dry bread crumbs
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

With a sharp paring knife, remove the tops of the bell peppers and the seeds. Discard the tops and seeds and set the peppers aside. In a large bowl combine the rice, tomatoes, corn, beans, Monterey Jack cheese, olives, onion salt, and black pepper. Mix well and spoon into the cavity of each pepper. Set aside.

In a small bowl whisk together the spaghetti sauce and stock until smooth. Place half in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Carefully place the filled peppers on top and spoon the remaining sauce on each pepper. Sprinkle the tops evenly with the bread crumbs. Cover and cook on low for $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 hours. Carefully

remove the peppers with a large slotted spoon onto serving plates. Sprinkle evenly with the Parmesan and serve warm.

Vegetable Garden Gumbo

You will not miss the meat in this dish thanks to a bevy of terrific garden vegetables that more than make up for it in flavor.

Yield: 6 servings

1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped
1 red bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped
1 green bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped
1 large sweet onion, peeled and coarsely chopped
2 cups sliced okra
2 (15-ounce) cans black beans, drained and rinsed
1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup low-sodium vegetable stock
2 teaspoons Cajun seasoning
Hot cooked rice
Hot sauce

Scatter the bell peppers in the bottom of a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Top with the onions, okra, beans, tomatoes and their juices, stock, and Cajun seasoning. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or on high for $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Add more stock or water if the mixture looks dry. Serve warm over cooked rice with hot sauce.

Red Bell Pepper Sauce

I adore red bell peppers, so much that I grow them in my garden annually. The sweet flavor it adds to this sauce cannot be matched by greenies. You'll agree! I really like it served with spaghetti squash.

Yield: 6 servings

4 red bell peppers, seeded and chopped
6 Roma tomatoes, chopped
1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced
1 tablespoon quick-cooking tapioca
1 tablespoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
¼ teaspoon paprika
Chopped fresh parsley for garnish
Shredded Parmesan cheese

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, place the red peppers, tomatoes, onions, jalapeños, tapioca, oregano, cumin, garlic salt, black pepper, and paprika. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Pulse with an immersion blender until blended but still chunky. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh parsley and Parmesan over spaghetti squash or pasta.

TIP: This sauce can be cooled and refrigerated for up to 4 days or frozen for up to 6 months.

Beef-Stuffed Red Peppers

Sweet red bell peppers are stuffed with a tangy beef mixture to satisfy even the pickiest eater. The easy part is you don't have to cook the beef before stuffing. It comes together in a snap so you can be on your merry way and let the slow cooker do the work for you.

Yield: 4 servings

4 large red bell peppers
2 cups spicy tomato juice, divided

1 pound lean ground beef
1 egg
1 ½ cups instant rice
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon onion salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
⅛ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese

With a sharp paring knife, remove the tops of each red pepper and the seeds. Discard the tops and seeds and set the peppers aside. Place ½ cup of the tomato juice in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a medium bowl combine the beef, egg, rice, red pepper flakes, oregano, onion salt, black pepper, cayenne, and garlic powder. Evenly stuff into the bell peppers and place on top of the tomato juice in the slow cooker. Pour the remaining 1 ½ cups of tomato juice over the peppers. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours.

Place 1 tablespoon of the shredded cheese on top of each pepper. Cover and cook an additional 30 minutes. Serve warm with drizzles of the cooking juices.

Pepper Steak

My husband is not a fan of raw bell peppers, but he loves them in this recipe when they get tender and mellow. It is a beautiful presentation that can be served over rice, hot cooked noodles, or even fresh salad greens.

Yield: 6 servings

1 sweet onion, peeled and sliced
2 ½ pounds sirloin, cut in strips
1 cup low-sodium vegetable stock or water

2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon paprika
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 small red bell pepper, seeded and cut in strips
1 small green bell pepper, seeded and cut in strips
1 small orange bell pepper, seeded and cut in strips

Place the onions in a lightly greased medium slow cooker and top with the beef. Add the stock, Worcestershire, bay leaf, garlic salt, cumin, paprika, black pepper, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 2 hours. Add the bell peppers and continue to cook on low for another 5 hours. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Serve warm.

Roasted Bell Pepper Soup

One of the finest convenience foods in my pantry would have to be jars of roasted red bell peppers. I have dozens of uses for them, and this soup is where they star. Of course, if you have time to roast your own, feel free.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

2 (12-ounce) jars roasted red bell peppers, drained
3 carrots, peeled and chopped
4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1 cup dry white wine or additional low-sodium vegetable stock
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/2 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Chopped fresh chives for garnish

Place the red peppers, carrots, stock, wine, garlic salt, paprika, and black pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 5 hours. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Stir in the Parmesan, cover, and cook for 20 minutes longer. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh chives.

Pepper-Speckled Polenta

Bell peppers are remarkably versatile, and the mixture of colors available enlivens food. Use any colors you have on hand for this crowd pleaser.

Yield: 6 servings

6 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1 1/2 cups polenta or coarse cornmeal
1/4 cup chopped green bell peppers
1/4 cup chopped red bell peppers
1 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in pieces
Bell pepper strips for garnish

Place the stock, polenta, green peppers, red peppers, garlic salt, and black pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 3 to 4 hours or until the polenta is creamy. Stir in the butter until melted. Serve warm with a garnish of bell pepper strips.



*Pepper-Speckled Polenta
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PORK



Southern Country Pork Ribs

Cocoa Powder Pork

Super-Simple Barbecued Pork

Sorghum Lime Pork

Plum Spiced Pork

Carolina Mustard Barbecued Pork

Georgia Peanut Pork Stew

Southern BBQ Pork Sandwiches

Peppered Pork Salads

Garlic Pork and Rice

Parmesan-Crusted Pork Loin

Winter Fruit Pork Loin

Smoked Pork Chops and Gravy

Kentucky Burgoo

Southern Country Pork Ribs

This one-pot wonder uses plum sauce as the magic ingredient. You'll sometimes see it labeled as duck sauce. It is a sweet and sour condiment traditionally made with plums, apricots, sugar, and a host of seasonings. Liquid smoke is found in the steak sauce aisle of the grocery store.

Yield: 6 servings

1 (16-ounce) bag baby carrots
 2 pounds boneless country-style pork ribs
 1/2 cup ketchup
 1/4 cup plum sauce
 1/4 cup chili sauce
 2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
 1 teaspoon garlic powder
 1 teaspoon liquid smoke
 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
 1/2 teaspoon celery seeds
 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
 Chopped green onions to garnish

Scatter the carrots in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Top with the ribs. In a medium bowl whisk together the ketchup, plum sauce, chili sauce, brown sugar, garlic powder, liquid smoke, allspice, celery seeds, and white pepper. Pour over the ribs. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours or until the meat is tender. Serve warm garnished with green onions.

Cocoa Powder Pork

Before you turn your nose up at this recipe, let me beg you to keep an open mind. I have been serving this for years to rave reviews. It is just as at home in a taco shell as it is on a bun. Try it!

Yield: 6 servings

1 (2 1/2-pound) boneless pork butt, trimmed
 2 cups salsa
 2 tablespoons chili powder
 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
 2 tablespoons dried oregano
 1/2 teaspoon salt

Place the pork in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a medium bowl combine the salsa, chili powder, cocoa powder, oregano, and salt. Pour over the pork. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 4 1/2 hours. Shred the pork with two forks and serve warm in the cooking juices.

NOTE: While any heat level of salsa works fine for this recipe, I like it best with medium salsa.

Super-Simple Barbecued Pork

This is my quickest version of pork for those who simply don't have time to chop. It can be prepared and in the slow cooker in less than five minutes. By the time dinner rolls around, it appears you have been hard at work on this dish that is actually terrifically simple.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (4-pound) pork shoulder butt roast
 1 (18-ounce) bottle barbecue sauce
 1 (12-ounce) can cola

Place the roast in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Pour the barbecue sauce and the cola over the top. Cover and cook on high for 8 hours or until the meat is tender. Shred the pork with two forks and serve warm with the cooking juices.

★
*Southern Country
Pork Ribs
(page 212)*



Sorghum Lime Pork

Sorghum syrup is so tied to the South that it is hard for me to imagine cooking without it. I love the dark, rich tang it adds to this glazed pork that can be served over wild rice, coleslaw, or on toasted buns.

Yield: 8 servings

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 (3-pound) pork shoulder butt roast
1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
2 chipotle peppers in adobo, chopped
½ cup low-sodium vegetable stock
2 tablespoons sorghum syrup
1 teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
1 lime, cut in 8 wedges

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the roast and brown for 2 minutes on all sides. Meanwhile, place the onions and peppers in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Place the browned roast on top.

In a small bowl whisk together the stock, sorghum, garlic salt, and black pepper. Pour over the roast, cover, and cook on high for 4 ½ hours. Remove the roast to a wide, shallow serving bowl and shred with two forks. Skim the fat from the cooking liquid and discard. Pour the skimmed cooking liquid over the pork. Serve each portion with a lime wedge.

VARIATION: Substitute honey for the sorghum syrup.

Plum Spiced Pork

This dish has tang, and it makes me want to cook rice or sometimes add it to spinach wraps. A great side dish is red cabbage slaw.

Yield: 12 servings

1 (3-pound) boneless whole pork loin
½ cup plum sauce
¼ teaspoon black pepper

Cut the pork in half and place in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Pour the sauce over the pork loin and sprinkle evenly with the pepper. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or until the pork is tender. Shred the meat with two forks and serve warm with any cooking juices.

Carolina Mustard Barbecued Pork

Leave it to the lovely folks in parts of South Carolina to make their pork barbecue stand apart from others with the addition of mustard. Before I tried it, I really didn't think I would like the enhancement, but one bite changed my mind.

Yield: 10 servings

⅓ cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 teaspoons onion salt
1 ½ teaspoons garlic powder
1 ½ teaspoons paprika
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon black pepper
1 (4 ½- to 5-pound) Boston butt roast
1 cup prepared mustard
⅓ cup honey
¼ cup cider vinegar
1 ½ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
10 hamburger buns

Lightly grease a large slow cooker and set aside. In a small bowl combine the brown

sugar, onion salt, garlic powder, paprika, cayenne, and black pepper. Rub all over the roast and place in the slow cooker.

In the same bowl whisk together the mustard, honey, vinegar, and Worcestershire. Pour over the roast. Cover and cook on low for 9 to 10 hours or on high for 6 hours. Uncover and let stand for 15 minutes. Shred the pork with two forks and serve warm on toasted hamburger buns.

Georgia Peanut Pork Stew

There is nothing like a handful of Georgia peanuts to take care of a snack attack. Here, they come to the rescue of ordinary pork that takes on a decided crunch thanks to the nuts and the peanut butter. It's terrific served over shredded lettuce.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (4-pound) boneless pork shoulder roast
2 parsnips, peeled and sliced
1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 cup low-sodium vegetable stock
¼ cup low-sodium teriyaki sauce
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
1 tablespoon honey
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
¼ cup crunchy peanut butter
1 green onion (green part only), chopped, for garnish
3 tablespoons chopped peanuts for garnish

Place the pork in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Surround it with the parsnips, red peppers, and garlic. In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the stock, teriyaki sauce, vinegar, honey, and red pepper flakes.

Shake to emulsify and pour over the top of the pork. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or until the pork is tender. Skim the fat and shred the pork with two forks. Stir in the peanut butter, cover, and cook for 5 minutes longer. Serve with a garnish of green onions and chopped peanuts.

Southern BBQ Pork Sandwiches

In the South, barbecue is a meal, not a cooking vessel. And we take our barbecue very seriously. This recipe is one that I have been using since I hit the adult world after college. Serve it on hamburger buns or alone, but always with homemade coleslaw.

Yield: 10 servings

1 (3 ½-pound) boneless pork loin roast, trimmed
1 cup low-sodium beef stock or beer
1 (18-ounce) bottle barbecue sauce
¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon hot sauce
1 teaspoon onion salt
1 teaspoon black pepper

Place the roast in a lightly greased large slow cooker and add the stock. Cover and cook on high for 7 hours or until the meat is tender. Shred the meat with two forks and add the barbecue sauce, brown sugar, Worcestershire, hot sauce, onion salt, and pepper. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook an additional hour. Serve warm.

★
Peppered Pork Salads
(page 217)



Peppered Pork Salads

Schedule a party to be served around this recipe. It is one of my salad favorites thanks to the intensity of flavors that comes from fresh salsa and tequila. Give it a real kick by using hot salsa. I love it over shredded iceberg lettuce.

Yield: 12 servings

1 (4- to 5-pound) boneless pork shoulder butt roast,
cut in half
1 tablespoon vegetable or canola oil
½ teaspoon paprika
½ teaspoon garlic salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
1 ½ cups green onions, chopped
1 cup chopped fresh cilantro
1 cup salsa
½ cup low-sodium chicken stock
½ cup tequila
2 (4.5-ounce) cans chopped green chilies
Shredded lettuce
Lime wedges

Place the roast in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a small bowl combine the oil, paprika, garlic salt, and pepper. Rub over the roast. Add the green onions, cilantro, salsa, stock, tequila, and chilies. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours or until the meat is tender.

Shred the meat with two forks and serve on individual beds of shredded lettuce. Sprinkle each serving with lime juice and serve immediately.

Garlic Pork and Rice

This dish can make any weeknight meal something to write home about. While the amount of garlic might seem large, it takes on a nice mellow flavor thanks to slow cooking.

Yield: 4 to 5 servings

6 carrots, peeled and cut into ¼-inch slices
2 celery stalks, diced
6 garlic cloves, peeled and cut in half lengthwise
1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes, drained
½ cup low-sodium chicken stock or dry white wine
2 teaspoons dried oregano
½ teaspoon onion salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
1 (2 ½- to 3-pound) pork shoulder roast, trimmed
and quartered
Hot cooked rice

Place the carrots, celery, garlic, tomatoes, stock, oregano, onion salt, and pepper in the bottom of a lightly greased large slow cooker. Place the pork on top. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours or on high for 4 ½ hours. Shred the meat with two forks and stir into the cooking liquid. Let rest 5 minutes before serving over hot cooked rice.

Parmesan-Crusted Pork Loin

There is always a wedge of Parmesan cheese in my refrigerator just waiting to be grated or shaved. I love the saltiness it adds to this pork loin. This recipe was given to me years ago by my friend Joanne and it looks beautiful, slices great, and tastes fantastic.

Yield: 10 servings

- 1 (4-pound) boneless whole pork loin, cut in half
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup honey
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 3 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 3 tablespoons cold water

Place the pork in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a small bowl combine the Parmesan, honey, garlic, soy sauce, oil, basil, salt, and pepper. Pour over the pork, cover, and cook on low for 6 hours or until the center of the meat registers 160 degrees on an instant-read thermometer. Transfer the meat to a cutting board with a liquid moat and cover with aluminum foil. Let rest for 15 minutes.

Strain the cooking juices into a small saucepan and place over high heat. In a small bowl whisk together the cornstarch and water until smooth. When the juices come to a boil, gradually whisk in the cornstarch mixture, stirring constantly for 2 minutes. Slice the roast and serve warm with the gravy.

Winter Fruit Pork Loin

Pork has no problem being paired with fruits, and I love the slow-cooked goodness they give to this dish. I serve this with mashed potatoes and green beans. It's never boring!

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 (3-pound) boneless whole pork loin
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup apple juice or apple cider
- 3 tablespoons dry red wine or additional apple juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dry mustard
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon onion salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon white pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 Granny Smith or Braeburn apple, cored, peeled, and sliced
- 9 sprigs fresh parsley
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried cranberries
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup golden raisins

Place the pork in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. In a small bowl whisk together the apple juice, wine, mustard, onion salt, white pepper, garlic powder, and ginger. Pour over the pork. Tuck the apples and parsley around the pork. Sprinkle the cranberries and raisins over the top. Cover and cook on low for 8 to 9 hours or until the center of the meat registers 160 degrees on an instant-read thermometer.

Transfer the meat to a cutting board and cover with aluminum foil. Let rest for 15 minutes. Slice and serve warm with a liberal garnish of the fruit and drizzle of the cooking juices.

VARIATION: Substitute dried cherries for the cranberries.

Smoked Pork Chops and Gravy

All you need for this dish is a bowl of hot rice. I use smoked pork chops to give it an extra layer of flavor, but regular ones are just as delicious. Just make sure they are thickly sliced.

Yield: 6 servings

1/2 cup all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon dry mustard
 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 6 thick-cut (1-inch) pork chops
 2 tablespoons canola or vegetable oil
 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed chicken stock, undiluted
 1 teaspoon liquid smoke

Combine the flour, mustard, garlic salt, onion powder, and pepper in a large zip-top bag. Place the chops in the bag one at a time and shake to evenly coat.

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the chops until just browned, about 2 minutes on each side. Place the stock, liquid smoke, and any excess flour mixture in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Stir to blend. Add the browned pork chops, cover, and cook on high for 2 hours. Serve warm.

Kentucky Burgoo

This dish hails from Kentucky and traditionally contained meats from hunting, such as rabbit, squirrel, and venison. I have made substitutions of meats that are more likely to be found in the supermarket, with pork as the anchor. It makes enough to feed a hungry crowd.

Yield: 12 servings

1 pound pork stew meat, cut in large dice
 1/2 pound beef stew meat, cut in large dice
 1/2 pound skinless boneless chicken breasts, cubed
 4 small red potatoes, cubed
 2 large carrots, peeled and sliced
 1 medium sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 1 medium green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 (14.5-ounce) can low-sodium chicken stock
 1 chicken bouillon cube or 1 teaspoon chicken bouillon granules
 2 tablespoons bourbon or whiskey
 1 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 1 (11-ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained and rinsed
 1 (8.5-ounce) can English peas, drained and rinsed
 2 green onions, chopped, for garnish

Layer the pork, beef, chicken, potatoes, carrots, onions, green peppers, and tomatoes and their juices in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Do not stir. Pour the stock over the top and add the bouillon, bourbon, garlic salt, black pepper, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 4 hours. Stir in the corn and peas. Cover and cook on high for 35 to 45 minutes longer. Serve warm with a garnish of the green onions.



POTATOES



Kid-Alert Hash Brown Casserole

Golden Potato Soup

Creamy Scalloped Potatoes

Late Brunch Hash Brown Casserole

Potato Dumpling and Turkey Soup

Old-Fashioned Potato Wedges

In a Dash Hash Browns

Shepherd's Pie

Simply Salted Red Potatoes

Smashed Potatoes

Kid-Alert Hash Brown Casserole

The pizza-like additions to this casserole will bring kids of all ages to the dinner table in a hurry. It reheats beautifully if you have leftovers.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 pound ground pork or beef
- 1/2 pound sliced mushrooms
- 1 small green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 2 (14-ounce) jars pizza sauce
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed Cheddar cheese soup
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons chopped black olives
- 1 teaspoon dry Italian seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 (32-ounce) package frozen hash brown potatoes, thawed
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

In a large skillet over medium heat, cook the pork for 5 minutes or until done, breaking apart the meat with a spatula as it cooks. Drain and add to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the mushrooms, green peppers, pizza sauce, soup, milk, olives, Italian seasoning, red pepper flakes, garlic salt, and black pepper. Gently stir in the hash browns. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Top with the cheese during the last 15 minutes of cooking and cover. Serve warm.

Golden Potato Soup

Weekends are busy, and week nights are even crazier. So relax after a long day with a steamy bowl of this potato soup topped off with store-bought or homemade croutons. It also reheats well for lunch the following day.

Yield: 10 servings

- 8 large Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and cut in 1-inch cubes
- 6 baby carrots
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of onion soup
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion salt
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 1/2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup half-and-half, room temperature
- 1/4 cup fresh snipped chives
- Crumbled cooked bacon for garnish

Place the potatoes, carrots, celery, stock, soup, garlic powder, onion salt, white pepper, and cayenne in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Stir in the cheese, half-and-half, and chives. Cover and cook for 30 minutes longer. Garnish with the bacon and serve hot.

VARIATION: Substitute shredded Swiss or mozzarella for the sharp Cheddar.



Kid-Alert Hash Brown Casserole
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Creamy Scalloped Potatoes

I never get tired of scalloped potatoes. It is an odd kind of comfort food for me and seems to go with any meat I have in mind. To make this a complete meal, add cooked chopped pork, chicken, turkey, or ham to the layers.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

- 10 large potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 sweet onions, peeled and chopped
- 4 slices bacon, chopped
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed Cheddar cheese soup
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 1 cup milk or half-and-half
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- Fresh snipped chives for garnish

Layer half of the potatoes, onions, and bacon in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a large bowl whisk together the cheese soup, mushroom soup, and milk. Pour half of the soup mixture over the layers. Repeat with the remaining potatoes, onions, bacon, and soup mixture. Sprinkle the paprika and pepper evenly on the top. Cover and cook on low for 8 to 9 hours. Serve hot with a garnish of fresh snipped chives.

Late Brunch Hash Brown Casserole

All you have to do to have this cheesy casserole ready to serve for brunch is get up just a bit early. It's ready to go in five hours and tastes great with breakfast breads that range from sweet to savory.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 pound spicy pork sausage
- 1 (30-ounce) package frozen shredded hash browns, thawed
- 1 (16-ounce) container sour cream
- 1 (15-ounce) jar Alfredo sauce
- 2 (4.5-ounce) cans chopped green chilies
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

In a large skillet over medium heat, cook the sausage for 5 minutes or until no pink remains, breaking it apart with a spatula as it cooks.

Combine the hash browns, sour cream, Alfredo sauce, green chilies, red pepper flakes, and black pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Drain the sausage and stir into the hash brown mixture. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours. Serve warm.

Potato Dumpling and Turkey Soup

Southerners have been making dumplings out of strips or pieces of leftover dough for years. This soup has all the taste for little effort thanks to a few supermarket ingredients. You can substitute chicken for the turkey if desired.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 tablespoon canola or vegetable oil
- 1 (1 1/4-pound) turkey tenderloin, cut in large dice
- 2 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 large celery stalk, chopped
- 1 small sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme

1/4 teaspoon white pepper
 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
 1 (16-ounce) package potato dumplings or gnocchi
 1 (8.5-ounce) can English peas, drained and rinsed
 Fresh snipped chives for garnish

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the turkey and cook, stirring frequently for 6 minutes. Meanwhile, place the carrots, celery, onions, stock, soup, thyme, white pepper, and garlic powder in a lightly greased medium slow cooker, stirring to combine. Add the turkey, cover, and cook on low for 8 hours.

Increase the heat to high and stir in the potato dumplings and peas. Cover and cook for 30 minutes longer. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh chives.

NOTE: Shelf-stable potato dumplings can be found in the pasta aisle of the supermarket. If you purchase potato dumplings frozen, thaw before adding to the soup.

VARIATION: Substitute cooked turkey for the tenderloin and add halfway through the cooking time.

Old-Fashioned Potato Wedges

On our way home from school we used to stop at a market close to our house. They had the best potato wedges, and they would satisfy our mid-afternoon slump just enough to hold us until dinner. This is a recreation of that memory in slow-cooker form.

Yield: 6 servings

2 pounds red potatoes, cut in 1/2-inch wedges
 1/4 cup finely minced sweet onions

1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided
 2 teaspoons dried parsley
 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in small pieces

Lightly grease a medium slow cooker and add the potatoes. Sprinkle the onions on top. In a small bowl combine 2 tablespoons of the Parmesan with the parsley, oregano, garlic salt, and pepper. Sprinkle evenly over the onions and dot with the butter. Cover and cook on high for 4 hours. Transfer the potatoes to a serving platter and sprinkle with the remaining Parmesan. Serve warm.

In a Dash Hash Browns

With only five ingredients, you can have this dish ready for the slow cooker to take over in a dash. It's a great way to enjoy hash browns for dinner!

Yield: 6 servings

1 (32-ounce) bag refrigerated shredded hash brown potatoes
 2 (10.75-ounce) cans condensed Cheddar cheese soup
 1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, stir together the potatoes, soup, milk, parsley, and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Stir in 2 chopped bacon slices before cooking.



★
Simply Salted Red Potatoes
(page 227)

Shepherd's Pie

I'm quite positive a home economist created this dish, which was originally a way to use up leftover roasted meat. At some point, ground beef became the meat, but the potato "crust" has remained the same. This is a dish that everyone in your family will like.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 2 cups frozen English peas
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken stock
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon garlic or onion salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 2 cups shredded Colby or sharp Cheddar cheese
- 3 cups mashed potatoes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon paprika

Place the beef and onions in a large skillet over medium-high heat and cook for 5 minutes or until no pink remains, breaking up the meat with a spatula as it cooks. Drain and place in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Sprinkle with the garlic and top with the peas. Pour the stock over the mixture and sprinkle with the garlic salt, black pepper, and cayenne. Top with the cheese, then the mashed potatoes, pressing the mixture down with a spatula. Sprinkle the paprika over the top.

Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Remove the lid during the last 30 minutes of cooking. Serve warm.

Simply Salted Red Potatoes

Red new potatoes pulled straight from the ground hardly need any embellishments. I crave the simplicity of this dish on hectic spring days. It's adorned with butter and salt. Now, what could be better than that?

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

- 3 pounds small red new potatoes
- Water
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon coarse sea salt

Place the new potatoes in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add enough water to measure 1 inch in the slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours or on high for $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 hours or until a knife can easily pierce the potatoes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the potatoes to a serving bowl. Drizzle with the melted butter and sprinkle with the salt. Serve warm.

Smashed Potatoes

There's no better way to have potatoes cook to perfection than in the slow cooker. I love the old-fashioned potato masher I have of my grandmother's that leaves them smashed but not pureed. I like to use Yukon gold potatoes in this dish.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

3 pounds potatoes, peeled and cut in large dice
1 teaspoon onion salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon paprika
1 cup low-sodium vegetable stock or water
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, room temperature
and cubed

1/2 cup milk

Cooked crumbled bacon or fresh snipped chives for
garnish

Place the potatoes, onion salt, pepper, garlic powder, paprika, and stock in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 3 1/2 hours. Stir in the butter and milk. With a potato masher, gently crush the potato mixture until the butter has completely melted and the mixture is smashed. Stir and garnish with either crumbled bacon or snipped chives. Serve warm.

VARIATION: For cheese lovers, substitute 1 (5.2-ounce) package of boursin cheese for the butter.

PUMPKIN



Brown Sugar Pumpkin Butter

Pumpkin Bread Pudding

Fall Pumpkin Pudding

Pumpkin and Gingersnap Custard

Autumn Pumpkin Soup

Pumpkin Pie Dip

Brown Sugar Pumpkin Butter

The abundance of this recipe makes it worth sharing. Present it to friends to enjoy on biscuits or toast on Thanksgiving morning while watching the parades. Then use it again the following morning for fuel before starting a full day of holiday shopping and decorating.

Yield: 4 cups

- 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin puree
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup white sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sorghum syrup
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup apple cider or apple juice
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cloves
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground allspice
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the puree, white sugar, brown sugar, sorghum, cider, lemon juice, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, allspice, and salt. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. Stir the mixture well. Cover the top of the insert with a folded clean kitchen towel, allowing the excess to hang over the edges. Cook another hour, stirring halfway through. Uncover and cool completely in the slow cooker before using.

STORAGE NOTE: Transfer the excess to covered containers and refrigerate. Use within 3 days.

Pumpkin Bread Pudding

This recipe can be prepared the night before and refrigerated. It becomes an adult delicacy if you soak the raisins in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of bourbon for a few hours before using. Allow the mixture to stand at room temperature, then drain and reserve the soaking liquid to use for the required liquid in the topping.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin puree
- 2 eggs
- 2 cups plus 3 tablespoons half-and-half, divided
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract, divided
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cloves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground allspice
- 12 croissants, torn in pieces
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup golden raisins
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped pecans
- 2 cups powdered sugar

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the puree, eggs, 2 cups of the half-and-half, sugar, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons of the vanilla, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, and allspice. Gently stir in the croissant pieces and raisins. Sprinkle with the pecans. Cover and cook on high for 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours.

Just before serving, stir together the remaining 3 tablespoons of half-and-half and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of vanilla in a small bowl. Add the powdered sugar and stir until smooth. Drizzle over the individual servings of warm pudding and serve.

Fall Pumpkin Pudding

This is the ultimate creamy pudding and can be served either warm or chilled. I like to add a few gingersnaps to each serving dish.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin puree
- 4 egg yolks
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups half-and-half or heavy cream
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground allspice

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, whisk together the pumpkin puree, egg yolks, half-and-half, white sugar, brown sugar, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice until smooth. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Whisk until smooth before serving.

Pumpkin and Gingersnap Custard

I love gingersnaps, and they give pumpkin a zippy lift in this recipe. If you want added spark, substitute dried cranberries for the golden raisins.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (30-ounce) can pumpkin pie filling
- 1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup golden raisins
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup crushed gingersnap cookies
- Whipped cream for garnish

Gingersnap cookies for garnish

Place the pie filling, milk, eggs, and raisins in a lightly greased small or medium slow cooker. Mix well. Sprinkle the crushed gingersnaps over the top. Cover and cook on high for 4 hours. Serve warm with a garnish of whipped cream and gingersnaps.

VARIATION: Omit the golden raisins if you have picky eaters!

Autumn Pumpkin Soup

I was very surprised at how marvelous this soup turned out to be. And even my husband, who typically isn't a big pumpkin soup fan, asked for seconds.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin puree
- 2 small sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
- 2 cups water
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground allspice
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup half-and-half
- Fresh chopped parsley for garnish

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, place the pumpkin, sweet potatoes, celery, onions, stock, water, sugar, garlic salt, ginger, turmeric, and allspice. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Stir in



Pumpkin Pie Dip
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the half-and-half and mix well. Ladle into warm soup bowls and garnish with fresh parsley.

NOTE: This recipe uses pumpkin puree, not pumpkin pie filling!

Pumpkin Pie Dip

My friend Michelle made this one year for a Halloween party and I fell in love with it. I have adapted it for the slow cooker, and it's incredible served with fall apple wedges or gingersnaps.

Yield: 12 servings

2 (16.25-ounce) cans pumpkin pie filling
1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese
½ cup sour cream
2 tablespoons toasted chopped walnuts or pecans
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
Gingersnaps
Apple wedges

Place the pumpkin pie filling, cream cheese, and sour cream in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 2 hours. Stir well and top with the walnuts and cinnamon. Serve warm with gingersnaps and apple wedges.



SAUSAGE



Bratwurst and Cabbage Stew

Sausage and Hominy Stew

Sausage Cheese Dip

Turkey Sausage and Wild Rice Soup

Tailgate Cocktail Smokies

Drunken Dunkin' Dogs

Sausage and Succotash Soup

Bratwurst and Cabbage Stew

Hearty bratwurst finds a home with straight-from-the-garden cabbage. It is economical, easy, and especially good when the cabbage is in season locally.

Yield: 6 servings

1/2 head (4 cups) coarsely chopped green cabbage
 1 (16-ounce) package bratwurst, cut in 1/2-inch slices
 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 1 sweet onion, peeled and cut in thin wedges
 1 1/2 cups diced red potatoes
 2 (14.5-ounce) cans low-sodium chicken stock
 1 tablespoon spicy brown mustard
 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
 1/4 teaspoon onion or garlic salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 1/8 teaspoon celery seeds
 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 Shredded Swiss cheese for garnish

Place the cabbage, bratwurst, red peppers, onions, and potatoes in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a large bowl whisk together the stock, mustard, vinegar, onion salt, black pepper, celery seeds, and cayenne. Pour over the cabbage mixture. Cover and cook on low for 7 1/2 hours or on high for 3 hours. Garnish each serving with a sprinkling of Swiss cheese before serving.

VARIATION: Substitute smoked sausage for the bratwurst.

Sausage and Hominy Stew

I love the mixture of yellow and white hominy in this yummy stew. The green chilies add just the right amount of depth.

Yield: 8 servings

2 pounds smoked sausage, thickly sliced
 3 large red potatoes, cubed
 16 baby carrots
 3 1/2 cups water or low-sodium vegetable stock
 1 (15-ounce) can white hominy, drained and rinsed
 1 (15-ounce) can yellow hominy, drained and rinsed
 1 (4.5-ounce) can chopped green chilies
 1 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro

Place the sausages, potatoes, carrots, water, white hominy, yellow hominy, chilies, garlic salt, pepper, cumin, and oregano in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours, adding the cilantro during the last 30 minutes of cooking. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute a peeled and chopped sweet onion for the baby carrots.

★
Bratwurst and Cabbage Stew
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Sausage Cheese Dip

Pork sausage doesn't have to stay on the breakfast table. I like hot sausage in this dip, but if you want to control your own level of spice, use mild and season it with cayenne pepper.

Yield: 16 servings

1 pound pork sausage, mild or hot
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 1 (32-ounce) package American processed cheese loaf, cubed
 1 (16-ounce) can low-sodium refried beans
 1 (16-ounce) jar mild or medium salsa
 1 (5.75-ounce) jar sliced green olives with pimientos, drained
 Assorted crackers

In a large skillet over medium heat, cook the sausage for 5 minutes or until no pink remains, breaking apart the sausage with a spatula as it cooks. Place the onions, red peppers, cheese, beans, salsa, and olives in a lightly greased small or medium slow cooker. Add the sausage, cover, and cook on low for 3 hours or until the cheese is completely melted. Stir well before serving warm with assorted crackers.

Turkey Sausage and Wild Rice Soup

Sausage making began as a way to utilize the trimmings left over after making regular meat cuts. Turkey sausage is relatively new to the sausage scene and is terrific. If you haven't tried it, here's your excuse.

Yield: 6 servings

3 celery stalks, chopped
 3 carrots, peeled and chopped
 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 3 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 1 cup diced turkey sausage
 1/2 cup wild rice, uncooked
 1 teaspoon dried tarragon
 1/2 teaspoon onion salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 1 (8.5-ounce) can English peas, drained
 1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk
 1/4 cup all-purpose flour

Place the celery, carrots, garlic, stock, sausage, rice, tarragon, onion salt, and pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours. Add the peas and cook an additional 15 minutes. Whisk together the milk and flour in a small bowl until smooth. Add to the soup, cover, and cook for 15 minutes longer. Serve warm.

Tailgate Cocktail Smokies

This recipe goes back for eons, and it is still a go-to dish for kicking off the tailgating season. It's economical to boot!

Yield: 16 to 18 servings

- 2 (16-ounce) packages cocktail smoked sausage links
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ½ cup ketchup
- 3 tablespoons prepared horseradish

Place the sausages, brown sugar, ketchup, and horseradish in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Stir well to evenly blend. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Serve warm.

Drunken Dunkin' Dogs

This recipe carries ordinary cocktail smoked sausages to an adult level with just the right amount of spice to kick off your party in fine fashion!

Yield: 25 servings

- 3 (16-ounce) packages cocktail smoked sausage links
- 2 (10.75-ounce) cans condensed tomato soup
- 1 cup bourbon or whiskey
- ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Place the sausages in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a large bowl whisk together the soups, bourbon, brown sugar, vinegar, Worcestershire, garlic powder, and pepper. Pour over the sausages. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Serve warm.

Sausage and Succotash Soup

Let the end of summer arrive and you'll find succotash on Southern tables. It uses up the lima beans, corn, and peppers that frequent home gardens. For this version that I make every September, I've made it a one-dish meal by adding spicy sausage. If you don't have andouille, regular smoked sausage works well as a substitute.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 pound andouille sausage, sliced thin
- 1 large red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 4 cups baby lima beans (if frozen, no need to thaw)
- 2 cups fresh whole kernel corn or 1 (15-ounce) can, drained and rinsed
- 1 (8.5-ounce) can creamed corn
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon onion salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 (32-ounce) carton low-sodium chicken stock
- ½ cup half-and-half, room temperature
- Fresh thyme leaves for garnish

Layer the sausages, red peppers, garlic, beans, whole kernel corn, and creamed corn in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Do not stir. Sprinkle with the flour, chopped thyme, onion salt, and black pepper. Let stand for 10 minutes.

Add the stock, cover, and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours. Turn off the slow cooker and stir in the half-and-half. Let stand covered for 15 minutes. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh thyme.



Kosmetik Linie
Schlösser
MARMOR SEITE
Nachdem Hand waschen
Achtung! Schäumen
die Hände gründlich
mit Wasser abspülen
und die Haut
trocknen lassen

SEAFOOD



Any Party Crab Dip
Fresh Crab and Corn Soup
Pull Out the Newspaper Shrimp Boil
Florida Seafood Chowder
Garden-Spiked White Fish Stew
Serve with Anything Shrimp
Gulf Coast Shrimp Jambalaya
Easy Seafood Cheese Dip
Simply Perfection Oyster Stew

Any Party Crab Dip

Party-goers love dips, and this one is great for cool-weather events because it can be served straight from your small slow cooker. Feel free to use any leftovers as a topping for toasted bread or baked potatoes.

Yield: 2 1/3 cups

1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese
 2 green onions, chopped
 1 (2-ounce) jar diced pimientos, drained
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
 1 tablespoon milk
 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
 1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh dill
 1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 2 (6-ounce) cans lump crabmeat, drained
 2 tablespoons capers, drained and rinsed
 1/4 teaspoon hot sauce
 Assorted crackers

In a lightly greased small slow cooker, place the cream cheese, onions, pimientos, parsley, mayonnaise, milk, mustard, Worcestershire, dill, garlic salt, pepper, and crabmeat. Cover and cook on low for 1 1/2 hours. Blend in the capers and hot sauce. Cover and cook for 30 minutes longer. Serve warm with assorted crackers.

Fresh Crab and Corn Soup

The beauty of seafood in a slow cooker is that it doesn't take long to prepare or to have ready to enjoy. This recipe was written in my mother's three-ring recipe notebook and it's terrific!

Yield: 6 servings

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut in pieces
 4 cups half-and-half
 1 pound fresh crabmeat
 4 green onions, sliced
 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of shrimp soup
 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of celery soup
 1 (20-ounce) package frozen creamed corn, thawed
 1 1/2 teaspoons Creole seasoning
 1/2 teaspoon paprika
 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
 Salad croutons for garnish

Place the butter in a lightly greased large slow cooker on high heat. Cover and allow to melt, around 5 minutes. When melted, stir in the half-and-half until well blended. Add the crabmeat, onions, cream of shrimp soup, cream of celery soup, corn, Creole seasoning, paprika, and white pepper. Mix well, cover, and cook on high for 30 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and cook an additional 2 hours, stirring every 45 minutes. Serve warm with a garnish of croutons.

Pull Out the Newspaper Shrimp Boil

Traditionally, shrimp boils are served over layers of newspaper that are placed on the top of outdoor tables. They would catch the excess moisture and serve as an easy way to clean up the mess. Cleanup is not a problem any longer with this simple version done in the largest slow cooker you can find.

Yield: 6 servings

12 small red potatoes
 9 1/2 cups water

1 ½ cups low-sodium beef stock or 1 (12-ounce) bottle dark beer
 1 large sweet onion, peeled and quartered
 ¼ cup seafood seasoning
 2 lemons
 1 pound smoked sausage, cut in 1-inch slices
 3 frozen ears corn, cut in half crosswise
 2 pounds extra large raw shrimp
 Hot sauce
 Cocktail sauce

Place the potatoes in a lightly greased large slow cooker and add the water, stock, onions, and seafood seasoning. Cut the lemons in half and squeeze the juice into the slow cooker. Add the lemon halves, cover, and cook on low for 3 hours. Add the sausages and corn. Cover and cook another 2 hours. Add the shrimp, increase the heat to high, and cover. Cook for 15 minutes and turn the heat off. Let stand for another 15 minutes before draining. Remove and discard the lemon halves. Serve with hot sauce and cocktail sauce.

Florida Seafood Chowder

I cannot resist bringing home a cooler full of seafood every time I get near the coast. This recipe lets you relive that enjoyment even after you return from the vacation.

Yield: 6 servings

1 ½ pounds potatoes, peeled and cut into large chunks
 3 celery stalks, chopped
 1 (8-ounce) bottle clam juice
 ¼ cup low-sodium vegetable stock or dry white wine
 ¼ cup water
 2 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca

1 tablespoon unsalted butter
 1 bay leaf
 ½ teaspoon onion salt
 ½ teaspoon hot sauce
 ¼ teaspoon white pepper
 ¼ teaspoon dried thyme
 1 ½ cups half-and-half, room temperature
 1 pound large shrimp, peeled and deveined
 ½ pound scallops
 Fresh chives for garnish

Place the potatoes and celery in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the clam juice, stock, water, tapioca, butter, bay leaf, onion salt, hot sauce, white pepper, and thyme. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 4 hours. Add the half-and-half, shrimp, and scallops. Cover and cook on high for 20 minutes longer. Turn off the slow cooker and let stand uncovered for 10 minutes. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh chives.

Garden-Spiked White Fish Stew

Select any white fish you want to use in this light but filling stew. I use haddock, monkfish, and tilapia most often.

Yield: 6 servings

1 ½ pounds potatoes, peeled and cut in large chunks
 1 leek, finely chopped
 3 green onions, chopped, with ¼ cup of the green portions reserved
 1 small fennel head, finely chopped
 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 (8-ounce) bottle clam juice
 ⅓ cup low-sodium vegetable stock or dry white wine

2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 bay leaf
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon fresh chopped oregano
1/2 teaspoon celery or onion salt
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1/2 teaspoon white pepper
1 1/2 pounds white fish, cut in large chunks
1 tablespoon lemon juice

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, place the potatoes, leeks, green onions (except for reserved greens), fennel, tomatoes and their juices, clam juice, stock, garlic, bay leaf, oil, oregano, celery salt, red pepper flakes, and white pepper. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 4 hours.

Remove and discard the bay leaf. Gently add the fish and lemon juice. Cover and cook on high for 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and let stand covered for 15 minutes longer before serving warm with a garnish of the reserved green onion tops.

Serve with Anything Shrimp

Maybe you've made a haul from the coast or perhaps the local market, and now you've got lots of shrimp on your hands. In less than a couple of hours, you've got the makings for a party of any kind. Serve it as is, over rice, on salads, as a po'boy, or however you wish.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

2 pounds raw shrimp, unpeeled
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut in pieces
1/3 cup lemon juice
1/3 cup low-sodium vegetable stock or dry white wine
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

1 teaspoon seafood seasoning
1/2 teaspoon onion salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
Lemon wedges

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, place the shrimp, garlic, butter, lemon juice, stock, Worcestershire, seafood seasoning, onion salt, and pepper. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. Add the lemon zest, cover, and cook another 15 minutes. Uncover and let stand for 5 minutes. Serve with lemon wedges and plenty of napkins.

Gulf Coast Shrimp Jambalaya

This recipe is loaded with shrimp . . . so much so that you'll get a piece in every bite. That's my kind of shrimp dinner!

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

1 (14.5-ounce) can whole tomatoes, crushed, undrained
1 1/2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
1/3 cup tomato paste
1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
2 celery stalks, chopped
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 tablespoon dried parsley
1 1/2 teaspoons hot sauce
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
3 pounds medium raw shrimp, peeled and deveined
Hot cooked rice

★
*Serve with
Anything Shrimp
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In a lightly greased large slow cooker, combine the tomatoes and their juices, stock, tomato paste, peppers, onions, celery, garlic, parsley, hot sauce, black pepper, cayenne, garlic salt, basil, and oregano. Cover and cook on high for 2 hours. Add the shrimp, cover, and cook at least 30 minutes longer or until the shrimp turn pink. Let stand covered for 10 minutes before serving over hot cooked rice.

Easy Seafood Cheese Dip

With just four ingredients stirred together in a slow cooker, you can have a great warm cheesy dip that will remind you of warmer days on the beach!

Yield: 5 cups

- 1 (32-ounce) package processed American cheese loaf, cubed
- 1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
- 1 (6-ounce) can lump crabmeat, drained
- 2 cups cooked salad shrimp
- Assorted crackers

Place the cheese, tomatoes and green chilies and their juices, crabmeat, and shrimp in a lightly greased small slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Serve warm with assorted crackers.

Simply Perfection Oyster Stew

I honestly don't know how anyone could possibly be able to resist this stew. It is perfection from the sea with oysters swimming in a buttery milk bath. A crusty loaf of bread is a must, along with healthy appetites!

Yield: 6 servings

- 8 cups half-and-half
- 4 shallots, peeled and chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 (2-ounce) jar diced pimientos, drained
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 (12-ounce) containers fresh shucked oysters, undrained
- 2 tablespoons fresh snipped chives for garnish

Place the half-and-half, shallots, celery, pimientos, garlic salt, black pepper, and cayenne in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. After 45 minutes, place the butter in a large saucepan over low heat. When melted, add the oysters and their liquid. Cook 5 minutes and add to the slow cooker. Cover and cook 2 ½ hours longer on high. Sprinkle with the chives and serve warm.





SQUASH **(WINTER AND** **SUMMER)**



Butternut Squash Stew

Out of Abundance Squash Casserole

Hard Squash Puree

Garden to Table Dinner

Coconut Squash Soup

Double Squash Winter Soup

Zucchini Strata

Butternut Squash Stew

The trend for “meatless Mondays” continues, and this is one of my regulars during the fall and winter months. Not only is it healthy, but it reheats well for Tuesday lunch.

Yield: 5 servings

- 1 small (1-pound) butternut squash
- 1 sweet onion, peeled and cut in small wedges
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole tomatoes, undrained
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 ½ teaspoons ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 (8-ounce) package couscous
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

Place the squash on a cutting board that has a kitchen towel underneath to prevent slipping. With a large chef’s knife, cut a small ½-inch slice off each end. Cut crosswise where the bulb meets the neck of the squash. With a vegetable peeler, remove the outer skin and discard. Cut the bulb section in half. Scoop out and discard the seeds. Cut the squash into 1-inch pieces and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker.

Add the onions and tomatoes and their juices to the slow cooker and break up the tomatoes slightly with a wooden spoon. Add the raisins, cumin, ginger, salt, pepper, and cinnamon. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 3 ½ hours or until the squash is tender.

Fifteen minutes before the squash is

ready, prepare the couscous according to the package instructions. Meanwhile, stir the chickpeas into the squash mixture and cover. Stir the olive oil and cilantro into the couscous. Divide the couscous among the serving plates. Top with the squash mixture and serve warm.

Out of Abundance Squash Casserole

Ah, the glory of growing summer squash. One plant can feed an entire neighborhood for weeks. This makes good use of the mounds you’ll likely have at some point in your vegetable crisper drawer. It’s great for serving when you’ve got a crowd of dinner guests or for transporting to potlucks.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

- 2 pounds zucchini, sliced
- 2 pounds yellow squash, sliced
- 1 leek, chopped
- 2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 2 cups soft bread crumbs
- 1 (8-ounce) container sour cream
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup finely chopped pecans
- ½ cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Bring a large Dutch oven of water to a boil over high heat. Add the zucchini and squash. Cook for 5 minutes, then add the leeks. Cook for 5 minutes longer. Drain in a colander, pressing the mixture against the sides with a wooden spoon to reduce the moisture content.



Butternut Squash Stew
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Transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker and stir in the cheese, bread crumbs, sour cream, eggs, garlic salt, garlic powder, and pepper. Spread evenly in the slow cooker and sprinkle with the pecans and Parmesan. Cover and cook on low for 2 1/2 to 3 hours. Uncover and cook 30 minutes longer. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute additional Cheddar for the Parmesan cheese.

Hard Squash Puree

The long season for winter squash makes it a real economic boost for tightly stretched budgets. That's one reason to keep cooked puree on hand either in the refrigerator or the freezer. You can stir it into soups, stews, eggs, or mashed potatoes.

Yield: 3 cups

1 large delicata or turban squash or 2 butternut or acorn squash

Remove and discard the stem of the squash, then cut in half lengthwise. Using a tablespoon, remove and discard the seeds. Cut in large pieces and place in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours or until the squash is easily pierced with a knife. Uncover and let cool for at least 20 minutes. With a paring knife, remove and discard the skin from the squash pieces. Transfer to a food processor and puree for 2 minutes or until smooth. Refrigerate and use within a week or freeze and use within 6 months.

Garden to Table Dinner

This satisfying dish puts to use all those items you find yourself overloaded with during the early summer vegetable season. That's when you have the most to do outside in the yard, so let this simmer away while you tackle those tasks. All it needs is a loaf of crusty bread.

Yield: 6 servings

1 pound small red new potatoes
3 zucchini, cut in 1-inch slices
3 small yellow squash, cut in 3/4-inch slices
1 green or orange bell pepper, seeded and coarsely chopped
1 leek, chopped
1 pound Italian sausage, cut in 1-inch slices
1/2 cup low-sodium chicken stock or dry white wine
1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
1/4 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Place the potatoes, zucchini, squash, bell peppers, leeks, sausages, stock, Italian seasoning, garlic salt, and black pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours or until the potatoes are tender. Serve warm.

Coconut Squash Soup

My friend Teresa told me about a soup she enjoyed in Mexico that was enriched with coconut milk. That got my mind twirling around how I could integrate it into a squash soup. Here is the delicious result. Make sure you use coconut milk rather than sweetened cream of coconut in the recipe.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

2 large butternut or 3 large acorn squash (about 4 pounds), peeled, seeded, and cut in large dice
 1 large Granny Smith apple, peeled, cored, and cut in large dice
 1 large sweet onion, peeled and cut in large dice
 3 ½ cups low-sodium chicken stock
 2 teaspoons curry powder
 ½ teaspoon garlic salt
 ¼ teaspoon white pepper
 ½ cup coconut milk
 3 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar
 ¼ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

Place the squash, apples, onions, stock, curry powder, garlic salt, and white pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Stir in the coconut milk, brown sugar, and vanilla, cover, and cook on low an additional 15 minutes. Serve in warm soup bowls with a garnish of fresh parsley.

Double Squash Winter Soup

The most difficult part of this recipe is peeling the winter squash, but with one taste, you'll realize it was worth the time. This soup is loaded with flavor and beyond exceptional.

Yield: 8 servings

1 acorn squash, peeled, seeded, and cut in large dice
 1 butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut in large dice
 1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 5 ¼ cups low-sodium chicken stock
 ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
 2 tablespoons finely minced fresh ginger
 1 cinnamon stick

Place the acorn squash, butternut squash, onions, stock, brown sugar, ginger, and cinnamon stick in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Stir to blend. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Remove and discard the cinnamon stick. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Serve warm.

Zucchini Strata

When you hear the word *strata*, think layers. And that's exactly what this delightful side dish is . . . layers of fresh zucchini accompanied by some other garden friends. I like to serve it with roasted pork.

Yield: 8 servings

8 zucchini, cut in ¼-inch slices
 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 (16-ounce) package whole button mushrooms, sliced
 8 large Roma tomatoes, sliced
 1 cup spicy tomato juice cocktail
 1 ½ teaspoons dried oregano
 1 ½ teaspoons dried basil
 1 teaspoon garlic salt
 ½ teaspoon black pepper
 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
 2 tablespoons dry seasoned bread crumbs

Place half of the zucchini in a lightly greased medium slow cooker and top with half of the garlic and mushrooms. Repeat with the remaining zucchini, garlic, and mushrooms. Arrange the tomato slices over the top.

In a small bowl whisk together the tomato juice, oregano, basil, garlic salt, and pepper. Pour over the top, cover, and cook on low for 6 hours. Uncover and top evenly with the cheese and bread crumbs. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving warm.



Bourbon Candied Sweet Potatoes
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SWEET POTATOES



Bourbon Candied Sweet Potatoes

Sweet Potato and Lamb Stew

Sorghum and Sweet Potato Soup

Sweet Potato Butter

Sweet Potato and Apple Stuffed Pork Tenderloin

Bourbon Candied Sweet Potatoes

This recipe makes easy work out of a dish that will appeal to everyone on your guest list. I really like that the sweet potatoes are in slices rather than mashed for a change.

Yield: 8 servings

4 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut in 1/2-inch slices
 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
 1 cup white sugar
 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 2 teaspoons bourbon
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 2 tablespoons cornstarch

Layer a fourth of the sweet potatoes in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a medium bowl stir together the brown sugar and white sugar. Sprinkle a fourth of the sugar mixture over the potatoes and repeat, ending with the sugar on top.

In the same bowl used for the sugar, stir together the melted butter, bourbon, and salt. Pour evenly over the top of the potatoes. Cover and cook on low for 4 to 6 hours, or until a knife can easily pierce the potatoes. Transfer the potatoes with a slotted spoon to a serving dish and cover with aluminum foil to keep warm.

Pour 1/4 cup of the cooking liquid into a small bowl. Add the cornstarch and whisk until smooth. Transfer the remaining cooking liquid to a medium saucepan and place over medium heat. Bring to a boil and whisk in the cornstarch mixture. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Pour over the potatoes and serve warm.

VARIATION: You can substitute 2 teaspoons of pure vanilla extract for the bourbon if desired.

Sweet Potato and Lamb Stew

Succulent lamb and sugar-sweet potatoes come together to make a stew ready for any celebration. This is carefree cooking at its best!

Yield: 8 servings

3 tablespoons vegetable oil
 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon onion salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 2 1/2 pounds lamb stew meat, cut in 1-inch cubes
 1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
 2 (14.5-ounce) cans low-sodium vegetable stock
 4 celery stalks, sliced
 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 sweet potato, peeled and chopped
 Chopped fresh parsley for garnish

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Place the flour, onion salt, and pepper in a large zip-top bag. Add the meat and shake to evenly coat. Add half of the meat to the skillet and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Transfer with a slotted spoon to a lightly greased large slow cooker and repeat with the remaining meat. Stir the paste, stock, celery, and garlic into the slow cooker.

Top with the sweet potatoes. Cover and cook on low for 4 1/2 hours or until the meat is tender. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh parsley.

VARIATION: Add a chopped leek to the mixture when you stir in the stock.

Sorghum and Sweet Potato Soup

This is my favorite fall appetizer soup. I like to serve it in small teacups, and it always proves to be just the right amount of savory with a hint of sweet to kick off the meal nicely. This soup also freezes well, so don't hesitate to transfer leftovers there for later use.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into large dice
 2 cups baby carrots
 1 shallot, peeled and chopped
 4 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 ¾ teaspoon curry powder
 ½ teaspoon onion salt
 ½ teaspoon black pepper
 ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
 ¾ cup half-and-half
 1 tablespoon sorghum syrup
 Nonfat plain Greek yogurt for garnish

Place the sweet potatoes, carrots, shallots, stock, curry powder, onion salt, pepper, and ginger in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 7 to 8 hours. Use an immersion blender to puree the soup until smooth. Increase the heat to high and stir in the half-and-half and sorghum. Cover and cook an additional 15 minutes. Serve warm with a garnish of yogurt.

Sweet Potato Butter

Sugar sweet potatoes get a lift from juicy apples in this breakfast and brunch delicacy. Leftovers need to be refrigerated.

Yield: 7 ½ cups

3 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and sliced
 2 ½ pounds apples (Granny Smith, McIntosh, and/or Rome), peeled, cored, and sliced
 3 cups sugar
 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
 ½ teaspoon ground ginger
 ½ teaspoon ground allspice
 ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
 2 tablespoons cider vinegar

Place the potatoes, apples, sugar, cinnamon, ginger, allspice, cloves, salt, and nutmeg in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 1 hour. Reduce the heat to low and cook for 9 hours. Remove the lid and increase the heat to high. Cook until nearly all the liquid has evaporated, about 45 minutes. Stir in the vinegar. Using an immersion blender, puree the mixture until smooth.

Ladle into hot canning jars with a canning funnel and adjust the lids. Place on a wire rack to cool away from drafts and so the jars are not touching. When completely cool, refrigerate. Use within 1 month.

Sweet Potato and Apple Stuffed Pork Tenderloin

Prepare this recipe beginning in September when the local apple crop arrives on the market and you'll use it as a regular recipe through the holidays. As the calendar inches closer to November, add a few fresh cranberries to the mixture.

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 (1 1/2-pound) pork tenderloin
- 1 large Braeburn or Granny Smith apple, peeled, cored, and chopped
- 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon Creole or Cajun seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into thick slices

Place the pork between two sheets of waxed paper and pound with a meat mallet to a

thickness of 1/2 inch. Remove the top layer of waxed paper and discard. Sprinkle the chopped apples across the top of the pork.

In a small bowl combine the brown sugar, Creole seasoning, and salt. Evenly sprinkle 2 teaspoons of the brown sugar mixture over the apples. Starting at the short side, roll up the tenderloin and secure with cooking twine. Discard the bottom sheet of waxed paper.

Place the sweet potato slices on the bottom of a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Top with the pork and sprinkle evenly with the remaining brown sugar mixture. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours. Transfer the pork to a cutting board and cover loosely with aluminum foil. Allow to rest for 15 minutes. Transfer the sweet potatoes and pan drippings to a serving platter. Slice the pork and place on top of the sweet potatoes. Serve warm.



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Pork Tenderloin
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TOMATOES



Garden Fresh Tomato Sauce

Tomato-Bathed Chicken

Stewed Tomato Pork Chops

Cream of Tomato Soup

Monterey Jack Tomato Rice

Angel Wings

Herb and Cheese Stuffed Tomatoes

Tomato Parmesan Soup

Yellow Tomato and Basil Soup

Vodka Tomato Soup

Garden Fresh Tomato Sauce

It never fails that I seem to be in a feast or famine mode with my homegrown tomatoes. When the plants finally start producing, I've usually got more than I can handle. Now I put them to good use in this slowly simmered sauce, along with my homegrown bell peppers, garlic, herbs, and onions.

Yield: 2 1/2 quarts

2 pounds ground beef
1 large green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
2 large sweet onions, peeled and chopped
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
5 cups peeled, seeded, and diced tomatoes
1 (6-ounce) can tomato paste
1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
1 cup water
4 bay leaves
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 teaspoon dried marjoram
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper

In a large skillet over medium heat, brown the beef for 5 minutes or until it is no longer pink, breaking up with a spatula as it cooks. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the green peppers, onions, garlic, tomatoes, tomato paste, tomato sauce, water, bay leaves, parsley, basil, oregano, salt, sugar, black pepper, marjoram, and cayenne. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Taste and adjust the seasonings if necessary. Remove and discard the bay leaves. Serve warm over hot cooked pasta.

Tomato-Bathed Chicken

There is something quite comforting to the soul about chicken that is slowly prepared in a tomato bath. This recipe can use any and all chicken pieces you prefer. In fact, I like to use a mixture of white and dark meat.

Yield: 6 servings

1 tablespoon vegetable or canola oil
3 pounds chicken pieces
1 leek, chopped
2 small green bell peppers, seeded and julienned
1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, undrained
1 pound whole button or cremini mushrooms, cut in half
1/2 cup low-sodium beef stock or dry red wine
1/2 cup low-sodium chicken stock
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
2 teaspoons Creole seasoning

Pour the oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the chicken pieces and cook for 2 minutes on each side to evenly brown. Work in batches if necessary.

Place the leeks, green peppers, tomatoes and their juices, mushrooms, beef stock, chicken stock, garlic, and seasoning in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the chicken to the tomato mixture, turning to evenly coat. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours or until the chicken is completely done. Serve warm.

Stewed Tomato Pork Chops

Slow cooking keeps these pork chops terrifically moist, and the stewed tomatoes are pumped up with zesty Creole seasoning.

Yield: 6 servings

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
6 (1-inch thick) bone-in pork chops
1 shallot, peeled and chopped
2 teaspoons quick-cooking tapioca, crushed
3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 teaspoon Creole seasoning
1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
2 (14.5-ounce) cans stewed tomatoes, undrained

Pour the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat and when hot add the pork chops. Brown for 2 minutes on each side, working in batches if necessary. Drain on paper towels.

Place the shallots, tapioca, garlic, Creole seasoning, Worcestershire, and red pepper flakes in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Top with the pork chops, then the tomatoes and their juices. Cover and cook on high for 3 to 3 1/2 hours. Serve warm.

Cream of Tomato Soup

Get the griddle out and grill some cheese sandwiches. It's the made-in-heaven match for this grown-up version of winter comfort.

Yield: 6 servings

1 tablespoon vegetable or canola oil
1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 large red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, undrained

3 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
1/2 cup chopped oil-packed dried tomatoes, drained
1/4 cup tomato paste
2 teaspoons sugar
1 tablespoon fresh chopped basil
1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 cup half-and-half, room temperature
Salad croutons for garnish

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the onions and red peppers. Cook for 8 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Place the garlic, crushed tomatoes and their juices, stock, dried tomatoes, tomato paste, sugar, basil, seasoned salt, and black pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Stir well to blend. Add the onion mixture and stir. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours. Use an immersion blender to puree the soup. Stir in the half-and-half and ladle into warm soup bowls. Garnish with croutons and serve immediately.

NOTE: If you do not have an immersion blender, allow the soup to cool to room temperature. Puree in batches, if necessary, in a blender, then gently reheat and serve.

Monterey Jack Tomato Rice

Mississippi produces a lot of rice in the delta area, which is, I suppose, why I like it so much in practically any form. This one is a great meatless meal for me, and the leftovers are just as delicious.

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 (16-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, undrained
1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 (4.5-ounce) can chopped green chilies
1 ½ cups converted long-grain rice, uncooked
1 cup small curd cottage cheese
2 tablespoons canola or vegetable oil
1 teaspoon hot sauce
2 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese, divided
1 Roma tomato, diced
1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, combine the garlic, tomatoes, beans, chilies, rice, cottage cheese, oil, hot sauce, and 1 cup of the cheese. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours. Turn off the heat and top with the remaining 1 cup of cheese, diced tomatoes, and chives. Let stand uncovered for 5 minutes before serving warm.

Angel Wings

The first time I had these at a party, I was charmed. Instead of the “set your lips on fire” hot sauce version of chicken wings, this is a mild, easy-to-love version. I have seen many recipes for this, but here is my take on this heavenly dish.

Yield: 6 servings

18 chicken wings
1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed tomato soup
¾ cup low-sodium chicken stock
¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Place the chicken wings in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a medium bowl whisk together the soup, stock, brown sugar, and vinegar. Pour over the chicken. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Serve warm.

Herb and Cheese Stuffed Tomatoes

It is feast or famine at my house when it comes to garden fresh tomatoes. I either have none or so many I’m overwhelmed. When they seem to be all over the counter, I transfer them to the slow cooker for this recipe.

Yield: 6 servings

¼ cup low-sodium vegetable stock
6 large ripe tomatoes
¼ cup cream cheese, softened
¼ cup goat cheese, softened
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
½ teaspoon garlic salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper

Place the stock in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Core the tomatoes and remove a 1-inch portion of the flesh with a grapefruit spoon or a melon baller. Place the tomatoes upside down on paper towels to drain as you finish coring them.

In a small bowl stir together the cream



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cheese, goat cheese, Parmesan, basil, garlic salt, and pepper until smooth. Place 2 tablespoons of the cheese mixture into the center of each tomato. Place the tomatoes in the slow cooker on top of the stock. Cover and cook on low for 2 hours. Serve warm.

Tomato Parmesan Soup

This is a tomato soup designed for grown-ups. I worked on it for a luncheon with my friends Judy and Louisa and now it is a regular at my house.

Yield: 8 servings

2 (14.5-ounce) cans diced tomatoes, undrained
4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
1 cup finely chopped carrots
1 cup finely chopped celery
1 tablespoon dried basil
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon onion salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 small bay leaf
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
2 cups milk or half-and-half, room temperature
1 cup shaved Parmesan cheese
Fresh basil, cut in strips, for garnish

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, combine the tomatoes and their juices, stock, garlic, carrots, celery, basil, oregano, onion salt, pepper, and bay leaf. Cover and cook on low for 5 1/2 to 6 hours.

Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add the flour and stir constantly for 5 minutes. Gradually add 1 cup of the hot soup, stirring until completely

smooth. Add another cup of soup and stir until smooth. Transfer to the slow cooker and stir in the milk and Parmesan. Cover and cook 30 minutes longer. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Serve warm with strips of fresh basil.

Yellow Tomato and Basil Soup

I love heirloom yellow tomatoes because they have a slightly less acidic taste than red varieties. I like this soup in any temperature form, from hot to room temperature to the chilled leftovers.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

5 cups seeded, peeled, and diced yellow tomatoes
1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and chopped
1 sweet onion, peeled and chopped
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
3 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 teaspoon white pepper
1/4 cup half-and-half, room temperature
Fresh basil leaves for garnish

Place the tomatoes, yellow peppers, onions, garlic, stock, chopped basil, garlic salt, and white pepper in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Stir in the half-and-half, cover, and cook an additional 15 minutes. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh basil.



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Yellow Tomato and Basil Soup
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Vodka Tomato Soup

I didn't think that a bit of vodka would make such a difference in tomato soup, but it does. Use garlic-flavored croutons for a tasty garnish, or you can use a simple topping of chopped fresh herbs.

Yield: 6 servings

1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 (32-ounce) carton low-sodium chicken stock
 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 (28-ounce) can plum tomatoes, undrained
 1/4 cup vodka
 3 tablespoons tomato paste
 1 teaspoon salt
 1/2 teaspoon sugar
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 1 cup half-and-half, room temperature
 Garlic-flavored salad croutons for garnish

In a lightly greased large slow cooker, place the onions, garlic, stock, diced tomatoes and their juices, plum tomatoes and their juices, vodka, tomato paste, salt, sugar, and pepper. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 7 hours. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Stir in the half-and-half, cover, and cook another 30 minutes. Serve warm with a garnish of croutons.

TURKEY



Turkey and Dressing

Ground Turkey and Thanksgiving Fixins'

Spiced Turkey Breast

Turkey Bean Bowls

Start and Stop White Bean Turkey Soup

Turkey Pozole

Georgia Peanut and Turkey Stew

Smothered Turkey Burgers

Apple Turkey Meatballs

Turkey and Rice

Turkey Hash

Turkey and Dressing

I love Thanksgiving food and have wondered for years why I don't prepare it more often. This warm, hearty dinner is a fall favorite of mine that lets me do just that. It is a one-dish comfort food that anticipates autumn quite deliciously.

Yield: 8 servings

- 2 1/2 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
- 3 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 (4-ounce) can sliced mushrooms, drained
- 1 large shallot, peeled and diced
- 2 tablespoons dried parsley
- 1 1/2 teaspoons rubbed sage
- 1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
- 1 teaspoon onion salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 12 cups day-old bread cubes
- 2 eggs
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 5 cups chopped cooked turkey

In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, place the stock, butter, celery, mushrooms, shallots, parsley, sage, poultry seasoning, onion salt, and pepper. Simmer for 10 minutes.

Place the bread cubes in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a large bowl stir together the eggs, soup, and turkey. Add the stock mixture and stir until smooth. Pour over the bread cubes. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours. Serve warm.

Ground Turkey and Thanksgiving Fixins'

This is a real penny pleaser thanks to the use of economical ground turkey. The cranberry sauce and dressing mix mean convenience as well. It's all the things we love about Thanksgiving in one pot!

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 pound ground turkey
- 3 cups frozen green beans
- 1/4 cup prepared Italian dressing
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 (16-ounce) can whole berry cranberry sauce
- 1 (6-ounce) package dry stuffing mix
- 1/3 cup slivered almonds, toasted, for garnish

In a lightly greased medium slow cooker, layer half the turkey and green beans. Repeat. Sprinkle with the dressing and Worcestershire. Top evenly with the cranberry sauce and then the dry stuffing mix. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 3 hours. Serve warm with a garnish of the slivered almonds.

Spiced Turkey Breast

I love pulling out spices for this zesty dinner option. You can serve it over hot brown rice or let it stand alone with green beans and brown-and-serve rolls.

Yield: 6 servings

- 2 1/2 pounds skinless boneless turkey breast or turkey tenderloins
- 1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon lime juice

1 ½ teaspoons curry powder
 ½ teaspoon seasoned salt
 ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
 ¼ teaspoon white pepper
 ½ cup plain Greek yogurt or sour cream
 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro

Place the turkey and onions in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a medium bowl whisk together the stock, lime juice, curry powder, seasoned salt, cayenne, and white pepper. Add to the slow cooker, cover, and cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 3 hours.

Transfer the turkey to a cutting board with a liquid moat. Cover loosely with aluminum foil and allow to rest for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, with the slow cooker off, whisk the yogurt and cilantro into the drippings. Cover and set aside. Slice the turkey and serve warm with the yogurt sauce.

Turkey Bean Bowls

Turkey tenderloins are a terrific treasure found in the meat case. They are inexpensive, healthy, and pair well with an endless list of ingredients. In this case, it's good old Southern pinto beans. Serve in soup bowls over hot cooked rice.

Yield: 6 servings

1 ½ pound turkey tenderloins
 1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
 2 leeks, chopped
 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 teaspoon dried oregano
 1 teaspoon chili powder

1 teaspoon ground cumin
 ¼ teaspoon seasoned salt
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 2 (15-ounce) cans pinto beans, drained and rinsed
 3 cups hot cooked rice
 ½ cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
 1 Roma tomato, chopped
 1 (2-ounce) can sliced black olives, drained
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Place the turkey in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. In a medium bowl stir together the tomatoes and green chilies and their juices, leeks, garlic, oregano, chili powder, cumin, seasoned salt, and pepper. Pour over the turkey. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or until the meat is tender.

Transfer the turkey from the slow cooker to a cutting board and cover with aluminum foil. Let rest for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, add the beans to the slow cooker. Cover and increase the heat to high. Cook for 20 minutes. Just before serving, divide the rice into individual bowls and slice the meat. Place on top of the rice. Top with the bean mixture, then with the cheese, tomatoes, olives, and chives. Serve warm.

Start and Stop White Bean Turkey Soup

Start the beans soaking and prepare the rest of the ingredients, then go to bed. In the morning, throw it all in the slow cooker and you've got an inexpensive evening dinner that's mighty fine. Plus, it's a great way to use up turkey leftovers.

Yield: 6 servings

1 pound dry white beans or cannellini beans
 4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
 2 cups diced cooked turkey
 3 carrots, peeled and sliced
 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 (14.5-ounce) can stewed tomatoes, undrained
 1 ½ teaspoons dry Italian seasoning
 ½ teaspoon onion salt
 ½ teaspoon black pepper
 Fresh parsley for garnish

Place the beans in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Remove from the heat, cover, and allow to soak overnight or for 8 hours at room temperature. Drain and rinse the soaked beans and transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker.

Add the stock, turkey, carrots, garlic, tomatoes and their juices, Italian seasoning, onion salt, and pepper. Stir to combine. Cover and cook on high for 6 hours. Mash the beans slightly with a potato masher to thicken the soup. Serve warm with a garnish of fresh parsley.

VARIATION: Add a peeled and chopped sweet onion to the stock mixture.

Turkey Pozole

Pozole is a stew that always includes a Southern favorite . . . hominy! I like to use white hominy for this creation, but feel free to substitute yellow or a mixture of the two. Have a loaf of cornbread ready to smear with butter for the perfect dinner combination.

Yield: 8 servings

2 tablespoons canola oil

1 (2-pound) turkey tenderloin, diced
 2 red bell peppers, seeded and diced
 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and minced
 8 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 2 (15-ounce) cans hominy, drained
 1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 (4.5-ounce) can chopped green chilies
 2 tablespoons ground cumin
 2 tablespoons chili powder
 ½ teaspoon onion salt
 ½ teaspoon onion powder
 ½ teaspoon black pepper

Pour the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add the turkey and cook for 5 minutes, stirring frequently. In a lightly greased large slow cooker, put the red peppers, jalapeños, stock, hominy, tomatoes and their juices, green chilies, cumin, chili powder, onion salt, onion powder, and black pepper. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the turkey to the slow cooker and stir to combine. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours. Serve warm.

Georgia Peanut and Turkey Stew

I love the comfort peanuts and peanut butter add to this easy stew. All the other ingredients receive a nice layer of richness thanks to the addition.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (1 ¾-pound) turkey tenderloin, cut in 8 pieces
 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
 2 large red potatoes, cut in large dice
 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 ¾ cup crunchy peanut butter
 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups low-sodium chicken stock
 2 tablespoons tomato paste
 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
 2 teaspoons curry powder
 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon onion salt
 2 tablespoons crushed peanuts for garnish
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley for garnish

Put the turkey in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Top with the sweet potatoes, red potatoes, and garlic. In a large bowl whisk together the peanut butter, tomatoes and their juices, stock, tomato paste, ginger, curry powder, red pepper flakes, and onion salt. Spread over the vegetables. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Serve in warm bowls with a garnish of the peanuts and parsley.

Smothered Turkey Burgers

These turkey burgers are incredibly moist and flavorful, hiding the fact that you are using a lower fat version than traditional beef. However, you can substitute frozen beef patties if you desire. Serve between toasted buns.

Yield: 8 servings

1 (10-ounce) can diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Worcestershire sauce
 1 tablespoon garlic salt
 1 tablespoon black pepper
 8 frozen turkey burgers, unthawed
 2 portobello mushrooms, thickly sliced

In a medium bowl combine the tomatoes and green chilies and their juices,

Worcestershire, garlic salt, and pepper. Stir well and place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the mixture in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Top with 2 frozen burgers, side by side, and place 2 portobello slices on each burger. Repeat the same process with the remaining ingredients. Pour any leftover tomato mixture over the top. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours. Serve warm.

Apple Turkey Meatballs

These meatballs are life changing. I made them on an inspirational day in the kitchen and now they are personal favorites. They are moist and full of fall flavor!

Yield: 6 servings

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds ground turkey
 1 Granny Smith apple, cored, peeled, and grated
 1 egg
 1 garlic clove, peeled and minced
 1 teaspoon onion salt
 1 teaspoon black pepper
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shredded extra-sharp Cheddar cheese
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup apple jelly

Place the turkey, apples, egg, garlic, onion salt, pepper, and cheese in a large bowl and stir well to thoroughly combine. Using your hands, make golf-ball sized meatballs and place in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Place the jelly in dollops on top, cover, and cook on high for 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Serve warm.



Turkey Hash
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Turkey and Rice

Let's get comfortable. Get into your "after fives," pour yourself a nice glass of wine, and snuggle up for an already-made dinner that is great for cold-weather evenings. You can use fresh or frozen broccoli for this recipe, and if frozen, there's no need to thaw.

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 (2-pound) turkey tenderloin, cut in 1-inch cubes
- 2 ½ cups low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 (10.75-ounce) can condensed Cheddar cheese soup
- 1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon hot sauce
- 2 cups broccoli florets
- 2 (6-ounce) packages long-grain and wild rice
- 1 cup processed American cheese loaf, cubed

Place the turkey, stock, soup, poultry seasoning, garlic salt, pepper, and hot sauce in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 4 hours. Add the broccoli and rice. Cover and cook an additional hour. Stir in the cheese, cover, and cook 10 minutes longer. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Substitute an equal amount of cubed skinless, boneless chicken for the turkey.

Turkey Hash

Everyone has leftover turkey during the holidays. That's part of the fun when roasting a larger-than-life turkey. I love to take some of those leftovers for this slow-cooker creation. It is a great disguise for those who are growing weary of the excess and even uses up the leftover gravy.

Yield: 8 servings

- 3 cups frozen or refrigerated hash brown potatoes
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 3 cups shredded cooked turkey
- ½ teaspoon hot sauce
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- 1 cup turkey gravy
- ½ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- Fresh chopped parsley for garnish

Place the hash browns in the bottom of a lightly greased small or medium slow cooker. Top with the red peppers, mushrooms, and turkey. Sprinkle with the hot sauce, black pepper, and paprika. Drizzle the gravy over the top. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours. Top with the cheese, cover, and cook 30 minutes longer. Garnish with the chopped parsley and serve warm.



VEGETABLES



Winter Roots with Applewood Bacon

Early Spring Polenta

Vegetable Barley Soup

Early Summer Vegetable Bean Soup

Vegetable Pot Pies with Biscuit Crust

Buttered Mashed Turnips

Cream of Mushroom Soup

Caramelized Onions

Cream of Zucchini Soup

Creamed Parsnip Soup

Winter Roots with Applewood Bacon

One of the easiest ways to save money during the winter months is to take advantage of the numerous root vegetables that hit the market in droves. This recipe beautifully cooks them together, giving you a low-cost side dish that is marvelous next to roasted turkey or sliced ham.

Yield: 8 servings

- 1 ½ pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut in large dice
- 1 pound parsnips, peeled and cut in large dice
- 1 pound carrots, peeled and cut in 1-inch slices
- 2 sweet onions, peeled and chopped
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 4 slices applewood bacon, cooked and crumbled

Lightly grease a large slow cooker and add the sweet potatoes, parsnips, carrots, and onions. Lightly toss to combine. In a small jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the oil, vinegar, brown sugar, garlic salt, and pepper. Shake to emulsify and pour over the vegetables. Do not stir. Cover and cook on high for 4 hours or until the vegetables are tender. Toss with the parsley and top with the bacon. Serve warm.

Early Spring Polenta

In the South, polenta is frequently called cornmeal mush because it's made with coarse cornmeal. Here, it is blessed with the addition of early spring spinach and mushrooms. I tasted this recipe on an unexpectedly chilly day when lunch was supposed to be served outside. It warmed everyone up, and I copied it as soon as I got home.

Yield: 4 servings

- 5 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 (8-ounce) package sliced mushrooms
- 1 (5-ounce) jar oil-packed dried tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 1 ½ cups coarse cornmeal or polenta
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ¾ teaspoon dried basil
- ½ teaspoon garlic salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ heaping teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 pound fresh baby spinach, coarsely chopped
- Coarsely chopped toasted pecans for garnish

Place the stock in a saucepan over high heat and bring to a boil. Meanwhile, place the mushrooms, tomatoes, cornmeal, Parmesan, basil, garlic salt, black pepper, and red pepper flakes in a lightly greased medium slow cooker. Add the boiling stock and stir to blend. Cover and cook on low for 3 hours or on high for 1 ½ hours. About 20 minutes before serving, stir in the spinach. Serve warm with a garnish of toasted pecans.

VARIATION: Substitute ½ cup of shredded mozzarella for the Parmesan, but add it with the spinach instead of earlier in the recipe.



*Winter Roots with
Applewood Bacon
(page 278)*

Vegetable Barley Soup

If you haven't used pearl barley before, this is a good recipe for giving it a chance. You'll find yourself an instant fan. This is a grain that has been used for eons, but has seen a sudden surge in popularity. You'll find it in sizes that range from coarse to fine, but the medium size is best in this recipe.

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

1 tablespoon unsalted butter
 1 tablespoon vegetable or canola oil
 1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
 1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
 5 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1 (48-ounce) container low-sodium vegetable stock
 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes, undrained
 2 carrots, peeled and cut in 1/4-inch slices
 8 okra pods, sliced
 3 ears (1/2 cup) fresh sweet corn, cut from the cob
 1/2 cup medium pearl barley
 1 1/2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
 1 1/2 teaspoons black pepper
 1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt
 Salad croutons for garnish

Place the butter and oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the onions, mushrooms, bell peppers, and garlic. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Place the stock, tomatoes and their juices, carrots, okra, corn, barley, Italian seasoning, black pepper, and seasoned salt in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the onion mixture, cover, and cook on low for 6 hours. Serve warm with a garnish of salad croutons.

Early Summer Vegetable Bean Soup

Just about any vegetable that is being harvested in the early summer can be thrown into this soup. It gets a protein punch from kidney beans.

Yield: 8 servings

3 carrots, peeled and sliced
 3 zucchini, chopped
 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 2 (14.5-ounce) cans diced tomatoes, undrained
 2 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
 1 cup water
 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
 1/2 teaspoon onion salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 2 (16-ounce) cans light red kidney beans, drained and rinsed
 3 cups fresh baby spinach
 1 1/2 cups cooked elbow macaroni
 Shaved Parmesan cheese for garnish

Place the carrots, zucchini, garlic, tomatoes and their juices, stock, water, basil, oregano, onion salt, and pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or until the vegetables are tender. Add the beans, spinach, and macaroni. Cover and cook 20 minutes longer. Serve warm with a garnish of shaved Parmesan.

Vegetable Pot Pies with Biscuit Crust

This dish is so satisfying that it has become a more popular dish inside my slow cooker than chili. I like to use mixed vegetables of

broccoli, peppers, and cauliflower. I love the leftovers on the rare occasion I have them.

Yield: 6 servings

8 medium red potatoes, cubed
3 celery stalks, sliced
1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 (8-ounce) package whole button mushrooms, sliced
1 (16-ounce) package frozen mixed vegetables, thawed
4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup plus $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour, divided
2 teaspoons poultry seasoning
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 teaspoon garlic salt
1 teaspoon white pepper
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried dill
1 cup milk
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
1 teaspoon baking powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped fresh parsley

Layer the potatoes, celery, onions, mushrooms, and mixed vegetables in a lightly greased large slow cooker. In a large bowl whisk together the stock, $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of the flour, poultry seasoning, thyme, garlic salt, white pepper, and dill. Pour over the vegetables. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours.

Just before the vegetables are done, stir together the remaining $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour, milk, butter, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl. Stir the parsley into the vegetables and transfer the biscuit topping to the slow cooker by dropping large tablespoonfuls gently over the vegetables. Fold a clean kitchen towel in half and lay over the slow-cooker insert. Allow the excess to hang over

the edges. Cover and cook on high for 40 minutes. Serve immediately.

Buttered Mashed Turnips

Since I grow turnips, I've become an expert at cooking them, and this recipe always surprises guests who mistake them for mashed potatoes. It has changed the "I don't like turnips!" thinking in my family as well!

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

2 pounds turnips, peeled and quartered
1 pound baking potatoes, peeled and quartered
2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
3 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable stock
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon white pepper
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup half-and-half, room temperature
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut in pieces

Place the turnips, potatoes, garlic, stock, garlic salt, and white pepper in a lightly greased medium or large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours or until tender. Drain and transfer to the bowl of an electric mixer. Add the half-and-half and butter. Beat at medium speed until smooth. Serve warm.

VARIATION: Add 4 ounces of cubed cream cheese to the mixture when you add the half-and-half.

Cream of Mushroom Soup

Condensed cream of mushroom is fine for cooking purposes, but I don't prepare it to enjoy alone. This soup is what I make when I'm craving velvety sliced mushrooms in cream.

Yield: 8 servings

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
 4 cups sliced button mushrooms
 3 cups sliced wild mushrooms
 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon onion salt
 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
 1/8 teaspoon paprika
 4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
 2 cups half-and-half
 2 cups sour cream
 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Place the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. When melted, add the button and wild mushrooms and cook for 6 minutes. Sprinkle with the garlic, flour, onion salt, pepper, and paprika. Stir well to blend. Transfer to a lightly greased large slow cooker. Add the stock, half-and-half, and sour cream. Stir and cover. Cook on low for 5 hours. Stir in the parsley and serve warm.

Caramelized Onions

Instead of standing over the stove for what seems like forever, you plop it all in the cooker and go about your merry way. When it's all done, pack the excess into half-cup containers and freeze for later use. You will never be without them!

Yield: 4 cups

1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cubed
 4 to 5 pounds yellow onions, peeled and thinly sliced

Place the butter in a heavily greased large slow cooker. Add the onions (it will be full but will cook down quickly). Cover and cook on low for 8 to 9 hours. Stir halfway through the cooking process. Use immediately or cool to room temperature and refrigerate or freeze for later use. If refrigerated, use within 4 days.

Cream of Zucchini Soup

Here's a unique way to use up some of those mounds of zucchini coming in from the garden! I like serving it with a generous garnish of grape tomatoes.

Yield: 8 servings

5 cups grated zucchini (around 7 zucchini)
 2 baking potatoes, peeled and chopped
 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
 7 cups low-sodium chicken stock
 2 teaspoons dried tarragon
 1 teaspoon onion salt
 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
 1/4 teaspoon paprika
 1/2 cup half-and-half, room temperature
 12 grape tomatoes, cut in wedges, for garnish
 3 bacon slices, cooked and crumbled, for garnish

Place the zucchini, potatoes, garlic, stock, tarragon, onion salt, white pepper, and paprika in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours. Using an immersion blender, puree the soup until smooth. Stir in the half-and-half. Cover and cook an additional 30 minutes. Serve warm with a garnish of tomatoes and bacon bits.

Creamed Parsnip Soup

Extra parsnips in my crisper drawer led me to this soup sensation and I even hooked my husband on it. Serve small cups of this luxurious soup as a beginning to a large dinner party.

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

2 ½ pounds parsnips, peeled and diced
1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 (32-ounce) container low-sodium chicken stock
½ teaspoon garlic salt
¼ teaspoon white pepper
1 cup half-and-half, room temperature
4 thick bacon slices, cooked and crumbled
3 green onions (green parts only), chopped
1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves

Place the parsnips, onions, stock, garlic salt, and white pepper in a lightly greased large slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 8 hours. Turn the slow cooker off and uncover. Carefully puree the soup in the slow cooker with an immersion blender until smooth. Stir in the half-and-half and adjust the seasoning as needed. Cover and cook on low for 15 minutes longer. Serve in warm soup bowls and garnish evenly with the crumbled bacon, onion tops, and thyme.

NOTE: Leftovers can be refrigerated and used within 3 days.

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Beauty is located on these pages thanks to the professionalism of Mark Boughton and Teresa Blackburn. Individually, they are remarkable. Together, they are nothing short of genius! Teresa has been my friend for years and her talent for styling pictures is simply unmatched. Mark is picture taking perfection and always makes me smile. Mickey, your interesting facts of the day still intrigue me and only added to the laughter we enjoyed each day we were shooting.

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