



COOKING 101

REAL FOOD MADE SIMPLE

with Olivia Borer

WEEK 2: SLOW COOKER

WEEK 2 PLAN

VIDEO: Introduction to the Slow Cooker

In this video, I introduce you to the slow cooker, one of the simplest ways to make eating healthy easy for everyone. Simply throw the ingredients into the pot and let time do the work for you! We will also discuss prepping and freezing slow cooker meals for later use, as well as learning the pros and cons of using the slow cooker.

PDF: Slow Cooker Pros & Cons

Learn how to use the slow cooker most effectively to create delicious meals for your family, as well as stock your freezer full of meals for the future!

PDF: Slow Cooker Recipes

In this PDF, you will find super simple slow cooker recipes to suit all tastes and preferences. Recipes included are Amazing Beef Stew, Pot Roast, Beef or Chicken Fajitas, Balsamic Beef or Chicken, Cilantro Lime Chicken, Sweet Potato Chicken Curry, Salsa Verde Pork, Spicy Garlic Lime Pork, and Herb Mustard Pork.

VIDEO: How to Prep & Cook Slow Cooker Meals

Watch as I walk you through how to use the slow cooker for meals both made ahead, frozen, and thawed or made fresh using the Chicken Fajitas recipe.



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SLOW COOKER RECIPES

AMAZING BEEF STEW

Cook Time: 8-10 hours
Serves: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2lb Beef Stew Meat
- 8 Slices Bacon
- 1lb Carrots
- 4 Stalks Celery
- 1 Yellow Onion
- 1lb Baby Red or Gold Potatoes
- 1/2 Can Tomato Paste
- 1 Tsp Basil
- 1 Tsp Thyme
- 1/2 Tsp Oregano
- 1 Tbsp Minced Garlic
- 1-3 Tsp Sea Salt (to taste)
- 1/2 Tsp Black Pepper
- 2 Cups Beef Broth

You guessed it!
Bacon is the secret
ingredient - YUM!

Try a shallot for a
milder onion flavor
or omit if your
family isn't a fan.
Sub 1 tsp onion
powder instead!

Honestly, any
potato will work,
even russet
potatoes, as long
as they're cut into
about 1" chunks!

Pro-tip: Spoon the
remaining paste and put
into a freezer bag and
freeze flat. Easy to thaw
in hot water for the next
use, and it won't rot in the
fridge.

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large slow cooker, add the stew meat, tomato paste, spices, garlic, and broth.
2. Prep and add the vegetables and bacon to the slow cooker: cut the bacon into 1" pieces with kitchen scissors, peel and cut the carrots into 3/4" pieces, chop the celery into 3/4" pieces, medium dice the onion, and cut the potatoes in half if needed.
3. Cover and cook on low for 8-10 hours (do not cook on high with beef stew meat as it will get tough).
4. Serve and enjoy!

NOTES

- To prep ahead and freeze: combine all ingredients except the beef broth in a large freezer bag. Freeze for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, thaw completely in a large bowl, add to the slow cooker along with the broth, and cook according to directions. You can also prep the recipe ahead without freezing. Cook within 3 days.
- To cook and freeze: cook according to directions and allow the stew to cool completely. Portion into individual servings if desired and freeze in freezer bags or glass storage containers for up to 2 months. Thaw completely and reheat on the stove top or in the microwave.

POT ROAST

Cook Time: 8-10 hours

Serves: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2-3lb Beef Chuck Roast
- 2 Stalks of Celery
- 1 Yellow Onion
- 1lb Carrots
- 1lb Baby Red Potatoes
- ½ Tsp Black Pepper
- Sea Salt to taste
- 1 Tsp Minced Garlic
- 1 can (14.5 oz) Beef Broth or Beef Bone Broth (see week 5)

Honestly, any potato will work, even russet potatoes, as long as they're cut into about 1" chunks!

Try a shallot for a milder onion flavor or omit if your family isn't a fan. Sub 1 tsp onion powder instead!

Watch out for hidden added sugar or vegetable oils in your broth!

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large slow cooker, add the roast, spices, garlic, and broth.
2. Prep and add the vegetables to the slow cooker: peel and cut the carrots into 3/4" pieces, chop the celery into 3/4" pieces, medium dice the onion, and cut the potatoes in half if needed.
3. Cover and cook on low for 8-10 hours.
4. Shred lightly with tongs or two forks.
5. Serve and enjoy!

NOTES

- To prep ahead and freeze: combine all ingredients except the beef broth in a large freezer bag. Freeze for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, thaw completely in a large bowl, add to the slow cooker along with the broth, and cook according to directions. You can also prep the recipe ahead without freezing. Cook within 3 days.
- To cook and freeze: cook according to directions and allow to cool completely. Portion into individual servings if desired and freeze in freezer bags or glass storage containers for up to 2 months. Thaw completely and reheat on the stove top or in the microwave.

BALSAMIC BEEF OR CHICKEN

Cook Time: 6-10 hours
Serves: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2-3lb Beef Chuck Roast OR
2lb Boneless, Skinless Chicken
Thighs
- 28oz Diced Tomatoes
- 1 Yellow Onion
- 1lb Carrots
- 2 Tbsp Minced Garlic
- ¾ Cup Balsamic Vinegar
- 2 Tbsp Olive Oil
- 2-3 Tsp Sea Salt
- 1/2 Tsp Black Pepper

Both taste amazing!
Simply choose your
favorite, and adjust
the cook time as
needed.

Try a shallot for a
milder onion flavor
or omit if your
family isn't a fan.
Sub 1 tsp onion
powder instead!

Make sure to
grab balsamic
vinegar, NOT
vinaigrette!

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large slow cooker, add the meat, tomatoes, garlic, vinegar, oil, and spices.
2. Prep and add the vegetables to the slow cooker: peel and cut the carrots into 3/4" pieces and medium dice the onion.
3. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours for the chicken, 8-10 hours for the beef.
4. Shred lightly with tongs or two forks.
5. Serve and enjoy!

NOTES

- To prep ahead and freeze: combine all ingredients in a large freezer bag. Freeze for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, thaw completely in a large bowl, add to the slow cooker, and cook according to directions. You can also prep the recipe ahead without freezing. Cook within 3 days.
- To cook and freeze: cook according to directions and allow to cool completely. Portion into individual servings if desired and freeze in freezer bags or glass storage containers for up to 2 months. Thaw completely and reheat on the stove top or in the microwave.

BEEF OR CHICKEN FAJITAS

Cook Time: 6-8 hours
Serves: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2lbs Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breasts or Thighs OR 2-3lb Beef Chuck Roast
- 3 Bell Peppers
- 1 Sweet Onion
- 1 Tbsp Minced Garlic
- 2 Limes, Juiced
- 1 Tbsp Chili Powder
- 2 Tsp Cumin
- 1 Tsp Paprika
- 1/4 Tsp Crushed Red Pepper Flakes
- 2-3 Tsp Sea Salt

Both taste amazing! Simply choose your favorite, and adjust the cook time as needed.

Pick any combo of red, orange and yellow bell peppers!

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large slow cooker, add the meat of choice, garlic, lime juice, and spices.
2. Prep and add the vegetables to the slow cooker: slice the bell peppers into 1/4" strips and slice the onion into half rings.
3. Cover and cook on low for 6-7 hours for the chicken, 7-8 hours for the beef.
4. Shred the meat lightly with tongs or two forks.
5. Serve and enjoy!

NOTES

- To prep ahead and freeze: combine all ingredients in a large freezer bag. Freeze for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, thaw completely in a large bowl, add to the slow cooker, and cook according to directions. You can also prep the recipe ahead without freezing. Cook within 3 days.

CILANTRO LIME CHICKEN

Cook Time: 6-8 hours
Serves: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2lbs Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breasts or Thighs
- 1 Yellow Pepper
- ½ Red Onion
- 2 Limes, Juiced
- 1 Large Tomato
- 1 Cup Fresh Cilantro
- 2 Tbsp Minced Garlic
- 1 Tsp Cumin
- 2-3 Tsp Salt
- 1 Tsp Pepper

If you love red onion, feel free to use the whole onion or freeze the remainder.

The fresh cilantro imparts such an amazing flavor!

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large slow cooker, add the chicken, garlic, lime juice, and spices.
2. Prep and add the vegetables to the slow cooker: medium-large dice the yellow pepper and onion, cut the tomato in eighths, and cut or pull the cilantro leaves from the bunch (some stems are fine)
3. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours.
4. Shred the chicken lightly with tongs or two forks.
5. Serve and enjoy!

NOTES

- To prep ahead and freeze: combine all ingredients in a large freezer bag. Freeze for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, thaw completely in a large bowl, add to the slow cooker, and cook according to directions. You can also prep the recipe ahead without freezing. Cook within 3 days.

SWEET POTATO CHICKEN CURRY

Cook Time: 6-8 hours

Serves: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2lbs Boneless, Skinless Chicken Thighs
- 1 Red Pepper
- 2 Sweet Potatoes
- 1 Yellow Onion
- 1 Tbsp Minced Garlic
- ½ Cup Frozen Kale
- 3 Tbsp Curry Powder
- 1 Tsp Cumin
- ½ Tsp Turmeric (optional)
- ½ Tsp Cayenne
- Sea Salt to Taste
- 1 Can (14.5oz) Chicken Broth or Bone Broth (see week 5)
- 1 Can (14.5oz) Full Fat Coconut Milk

Fresh kale or spinach works too - just finely chop or cut it!

Like things spicy? Feel free to add more cayenne!

Look for a brand with only water, coconut milk, and maybe guar gum.

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large slow cooker, add the chicken, garlic, broth, coconut milk, frozen kale, and spices.
2. Prep and add the vegetables to the slow cooker: medium dice the pepper and onion and peel and medium-large dice the sweet potatoes (chop and add kale if using fresh).
3. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours.
4. Shred the chicken lightly with tongs or two forks.
5. Serve and enjoy!

NOTES

- To prep ahead and freeze: combine all ingredients except the broth in a large freezer bag. Freeze for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, thaw completely in a large bowl, add to the slow cooker along with the broth, and cook according to directions. You can also prep the recipe ahead without freezing. Cook within 3 days.

SALSA VERDE PORK

Cook Time: 6-8 hours

Serves: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2-3lbs Pork Shoulder Roast
- 1 (14-16oz) Jar Salsa Verde
- 1 Yellow Onion
- 1 Tbsp Minced Garlic
- 1 Tbsp Cumin
- 1/2 Tsp Red Pepper Flakes
- 1/2 Tsp Black Pepper
- 2-3 Tsp Sea Salt

Make sure to check that there is no sugar added!

Omit if you don't like it spicy or add more if you do!

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large slow cooker, add the pork, salsa verde, garlic, and spices.
2. Medium dice the onion and add to the slow cooker.
3. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours.
4. Shred the pork lightly with tongs or two forks.
5. Serve and enjoy!

NOTES

- To prep ahead and freeze: combine all ingredients in a large freezer bag. Freeze for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, thaw completely in a large bowl, add to the slow cooker, and cook according to directions. You can also prep the recipe ahead without freezing. Cook within 3 days.
- To cook and freeze: cook according to directions and allow to cool completely. Portion into individual servings if desired and freeze in freezer bags or glass storage containers for up to 2 months. Thaw completely and reheat on the stove top or in the microwave.
- Feel free to add baby red or golden potatoes cut into 1" pieces for extra fun!

SPICY GARLIC LIME PORK

Cook Time: 6-8 hours

Serves: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2lb Pork Loin or Tenderloin Roast
- 1 Green Pepper
- 1 Red Pepper
- 1 Yellow Onion
- 1 Lime, Juiced
- 1 Tbsp Minced Garlic
- 1-2 Tsp Chili Powder
- 1/4 Tsp Red Pepper Flakes (optional)
- 1 Tbsp Sea Salt
- 1/4 Cup Olive Oil
- 1/2 Cup Water

Peppers not your favorite? Try carrots, onion, and baby red potatoes instead!

Not a fan of spicy? Switch to 1 Tbsp Italian seasoning instead of the chili powder and red pepper flakes

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large slow cooker, add the lime juice, garlic, olive oil, and water.
2. Slice the peppers and onion, and add to the slow cooker.
3. Place the pork on top and sprinkle all spices over top.
4. Gently mix some of the liquid mixture over the pork and vegetables.
5. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours
6. Serve and enjoy!

NOTES

- To prep ahead and freeze: combine all ingredients in a large freezer bag. Freeze for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, thaw completely in a large bowl, add to the slow cooker, and cook according to directions. You can also prep the recipe ahead without freezing. Cook within 3 days.
- Want to only marinate the pork roast (or pork chops, chicken thighs, or steak)? Simply remove the vegetables from the list and add all other ingredients to a freezer bag or large bowl. Marinate for up to 24 hours. Can also be frozen, thawed, and cooked as directed.

HERB MUSTARD PORK

Cook Time: 6-8 hours
Serves: 4-6

INGREDIENTS

- 2lb Pork Loin or Tenderloin Roast
- 1lb Carrots
- 1 Yellow Onion
- 1/4 Cup Stone Ground Mustard
- 1/4 Cup Olive Oil
- 2 Tbsp Coconut Aminos
- 1 Tsp Basil
- 1 Tsp Thyme
- 1/2 Tsp Oregano
- 2-3 Tsp Sea Salt

My favorite brand is
Fresh Thyme
Organic Stone
Ground. Avoid
bright yellow
varieties.

Coconut aminos are
a soy sauce
alternative. Find
them in the ethnic
section at the store.

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large slow cooker, add the pork.
2. Prep and add the vegetables to the slow cooker: peel and cut the carrots into 1/2" pieces and medium dice the onion.
3. Mix the spices, mustard, and oil together; spread over the pork and vegetables.
4. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours
5. Serve and enjoy!

NOTES

- To prep ahead and freeze: combine all ingredients in a large freezer bag. Freeze for up to 3 months. When ready to cook, thaw completely in a large bowl, add to the slow cooker, and cook according to directions. You can also prep the recipe ahead without freezing. Cook within 3 days.
- If desired, add 1lb baby red or golden potatoes. Cut into 1" pieces if needed.

SLOW COOKER PROS & CONS

Slow Cooker Pros:

- Set it and go! The slow cooker allows you to do the prep work in the morning, the night before, or even weeks in advance to make meal time simple and easy.
- The low-and-slow function of the slow cooker allows meat to stay tender and also works really well on tougher cuts of meat such as beef stew meat.
- The flavor combinations of slow cooker meals thrive in the low and slow environment, making the food tasty and delicious.
- Some slow cookers have a delay start function or can switch to "Keep Warm" after they are finished cooking, making it easy for long work days but shorter cooking times.
- The slow cooker is extremely easy to learn, making it ideal for beginners.
- The slow cooker can use cheaper cuts of meats or vegetables to make a delicious and healthy meal that otherwise might be more labor-intensive.

Slow Cooker Cons:

- If you don't have a slow cooker with a delay start or switch to "Keep Warm" function, meals with shorter cooking times can interfere with your schedule.
- Vegetables do not achieve a crispy quality, so those vegetables high in water content do not always hold up well to long cooking times.
- Some slow cooker meals can be thrown together easily, but others might take more time, prep, and planning.
- Uneven cooking results can occur, but this is not often an issue.
- Seafood does not often work well in the slow cooker.

MAKE AHEAD SLOW COOKER MEALS

How to Prep Meals for Freezing

- Label a gallon freezer bag with the recipe name, current date, and cooking instructions.
- Open the bag and turn the top down about 1".
- Add the meat to the bag first, then add all the other ingredients. Do not add broth (if called for) to the bag.
- Seal and freeze for up to 3 months.
- When ready to cook, thaw completely in a large bowl. This can be done for 1-3 days in the fridge, or on the countertop for several hours.
- Add the contents to the slow cooker, add broth if called for, and cook according to directions.

**This is a great way to use close-to-expiring meat. Grab it while it's on sale, throw it in the freezer, and use it later! Just make sure to note it was close to expiration on the freezer bag.*

How to Prep Meals without Freezing

- Label a gallon freezer bag with the recipe name, current date, and cooking instructions.
- Open the bag and turn the top down about 1".
- Add the meat to the bag first, taking note of the meat expiration date. Then add all the other ingredients. Do not add broth (if called for) to the bag.
- Keep in the fridge in a large bowl for 1-3 days depending on the expiration date of the meat.
- Add to the slow cooker (with broth if needed) and cook according to directions,

MAKE AHEAD SLOW COOKER MEALS

Which Foods Freeze and Prep Ahead Best?

- All cuts of meat (except seafood) freeze well and/or can be prepped ahead without freezing. Tough cuts of meat prep particularly well.
- Vegetables that prep well and hold their form in the slow cooker include peppers, onions, carrots, celery, tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, spinach, kale, parsnips, zucchini (larger cuts), butternut squash, cabbage, and other winter vegetables.
- Vegetables that do not prep well or cook well in the slow cooker include cucumber, lettuce, spaghetti squash, asparagus, broccoli, and cauliflower (although there can be exceptions including in soups).
- Dairy products do not hold up well in the slow cooker or freezing. Full fat coconut milk is a great alternative when needed.
- Fresh herbs can become bitter and overcooked; however cilantro holds up fairly well to slow cooking. Bundles of herbs can also be added to the slow cooker and removed before serving.
- Save bones from your meat as homemade, nutrient-dense bone broth is super simple in the slow cooker. Add bones, water, salt, and a bit of apple cider vinegar to the pot and cook for 24 or more hours. Add vegetables the last 6 hours of cooking if desired. See also week 5 for more information on an Instant Pot version of bone broth.