

Slow Cooking Adds Up to Quick Meals



Let's imagine you just picked up your children after music and sports practice and it's 5:30 p.m. They ask, "What's for dinner?" If you have no dinner plans, the drive-through or pizza delivery may sound like a good option, but that's hard on your budget.

Now imagine this: You walked in the door at home and are greeted by the aroma of hearty vegetable beef soup simmering in your slow cooker. You slice a loaf of whole-wheat bread and toss a salad. Dinner is served! Evenings like this can become a reality in your home with a slow cooker.

Save Time and Money

Buying a slow cooker is a bit of an investment. A slow cooker costs about \$30 to \$40, depending on the size and features.

The investment can pay off in the long run, though. A slow cooker uses less electricity than an oven and can help tenderize less-expensive cuts of meat. If dinner is ready, you are less likely to need to eat at restaurants.

Whether you are cooking for yourself or a family, slow cookers can make food preparation easier with one-step cooking. You can place all the ingredients in the slow cooker.

Safe Cooking Recommendations

- Always thaw meat and poultry in the refrigerator before cooking in the slow cooker.
- Cut meat into pieces to ensure thorough cooking. Large pieces of meat do not cook quickly enough to avoid bacterial growth.
- Because vegetables cook slower than meat and poultry, place the vegetables in the slow cooker first. Place the meat on top of the vegetables and top with liquid such as broth, water or a sauce.
- For easy cleanup, spray your slow cooker with nonstick cooking spray before using it, or use a liner for easy cleanup.
- Fill the slow cooker no less than half full and no more than two-thirds full. Cooking too little or too much food in the slow cooker can affect cooking time and quality.
- Measure the temperature of your foods before eating them. Follow the recommended safe internal temperatures below:
 - 145 F – Fish, beef roasts
 - 160 F – Pork, ground beef, egg dishes
 - 165 F – Turkey, chicken, casseroles

For more information and recipes, visit www.ndsu.edu/eatsmart.

This program is funded in part by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact your county Social Services office or call 1-800-755-2716.

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I have some recipes I'd like to convert to slow cooker recipes. Do you have any tips?

Most recipes can be converted to cooking in your slow cooker. See the following chart. Remember to add pasta at the end of the cooking process or it may become mushy. You may want to cook it separately and add it shortly before serving. You can add milk, cheese and cream one hour before serving.

Time Chart for Adapting Recipes

Recipe says	Cook on Low	Cook on High
15 to 30 minutes	4 to 6 hours	1½ to 2 hours
35 to 45 minutes	6 to 10 hours	3 to 4 hours
50 minutes to 3 hours	8 to 16 hours	4 to 6 hours

Winter Produce Guide

These fresh fruits and veggies are in season in the winter.



"In season" means they are at best quality and often lowest price.



Check the sales ads of your favorite grocery store.

Bananas	Cranberries	Pears
Broccoli	Grapefruit	Potatoes
Cabbage	Kiwi	Sweet potatoes
Cauliflower	Oranges	Tangerines
Celery	Parsnips	Winter squash

I sometimes make a large pot of chili to use during the week. How should I store and reheat the leftovers?

For safety reasons, do not store leftovers in a deep container (such as a slow cooker). Instead, refrigerate leftovers in shallow containers (with the food no more than 2 to 3 inches deep).



Reheat leftovers on the stove, in the microwave or oven until the internal temperature reaches 165 F. After heating, the food may be placed in the slow cooker on low to keep warm during serving. Use up your leftovers within three or four days or freeze them in meal-size portions.

Hearty Vegetable Beef Soup

- 1.5 pounds beef, bison or venison, cut into 1-inch cubes*
- 5 potatoes, washed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 5 large carrots cut into 1-inch pieces or 12 to 16 ounces of baby carrots
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 28-ounce can of tomatoes (choose flavored ones if you wish)
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. of salt (optional)
- ½ tsp. pepper
- 1 c. water

Menu idea:

Hearty Vegetable Beef Soup, tossed green salad, whole-wheat rolls, sliced apples and reduced-fat or fat-free milk.

Trim the fat from the meat. Combine all the ingredients in a slow cooker and mix well. Cook on low for eight to 10 hours or on high for four to six hours.

Alternate directions: Simmer ingredients in a large, covered pot on a stove over medium-low heat for 60 to 90 minutes, until vegetables are tender.

Use a "no salt" seasoning if you wish.

* If desired, you can brown the meat prior to adding.

Makes 10 servings. Each serving has 210 calories, 4 grams (g) of fat, 27 g of carbohydrate, 4 g of fiber and 290 milligrams of sodium.

JUST FOR FUN

Why did the student eat his homework?
The teacher told him it was a piece of cake.

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Please call for more information on nutrition, food purchasing or food safety.



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