



Live Healthy Georgia— Seniors Taking Charge Healthy Crock Pot Cooking



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It's a New Year, and many of us have resolutions to eat

healthier. Sometimes cooking healthy, home-cooked meals takes a lot of time. However, there is one tool that can help us with our goals—a crock pot (also known as a slow cooker)!

There are many benefits of using a crock pot. Crock pot cooking is time-saving and convenient...all you need to do is put in your ingredients in at once and let them cook while you go through your daily tasks! This helps maintain healthy eating when you're busy. You can also cook more than you need so that you will have healthy leftovers when you are on-the-go. Because you just place in your ingredients, crock pot recipes are usually simple to make. Many recipes include vegetables, so you make a full meal with little preparation. Crock pots also save money, use less electricity than the oven, and do not heat up your kitchen.

Before you can enjoy the home-cooked taste, be sure to learn the basic safety tips!

Crockpot Safety Tips:

- Crock pots **ARE** safe!
- Be sure to use a clean cooker, utensils, and work area; wash your hands before, during, and after preparation.

By Lauren Badger, BS

- Keep fresh foods (meats, poultry, chopped vegetables, etc.) in the refrigerator before preparation.
- Thaw meat and poultry and cut them into smaller pieces before putting them into the slow cooker.
- Fill the pot no less than 1/2 full and no more than 2/3 full; place the vegetables on the bottom, then the meat, then the liquids and other ingredients.
- If cooking meat or poultry, make sure the water or stock level almost covers the ingredients.
- Keep lid on, and only remove to stir or check food.
- If possible, turn the cooker on high for the first hour and then low (or whatever setting your recipe says) for the rest of the time. It **is** safe to cook foods on low the entire time—your food will be safe as long as the cooker is on.
- If the power goes out while you're away from home, throw away the food. If this occurs while at home, finish cooking right away by another method, such as a gas stove.
- Dried beans have a natural toxin, so you must boil them to take care of it before using them. To safely use dried beans, soak the beans for 12 hours, rinse them, and then boil for at least 10 minutes

before adding the beans to a crock pot.

Canned beans do not have this toxin.

- Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours after cooking is done.
- Do not reheat leftovers in a crock pot!

Now that we've gone over crock pot uses and safety tips, it's time to look at a recipe. There are many cookbooks and websites

with crock pot recipes. Recipes can be made healthier by using lean cuts of meat or trimming off visible fat before use; using low-fat dairy ingredients; using low-fat and low-sodium ingredients, such as broths and sauces; adding more vegetables; and using whole grain pasta and brown rice. Have fun with your crock pot cooking, and be sure to check out the winter favorite below!

Vegetable Beef Soup

Cooking Light Superfast Suppers, *Oxmoor House*, January 2003; www.cookinglight.com

Prep Time: 11 minutes; Cook Time: 7 hours; Yield: 8 1¾ C servings

Ingredients:

1/4 cup all-purpose flour

1½ pounds lean top round steak, cut into 1-inch cubes

Cooking spray

2 teaspoons spicy herb blend (such as Mrs. Dash)

2 (16-ounce) packages frozen gumbo vegetables mix

1 (10-ounce) package frozen chopped onion

2 (14.5-ounce) cans diced tomatoes with garlic, un-drained

2 (14.5-ounce) cans fat-free beef broth

1 tablespoon bottled minced garlic

1 tablespoon low-sodium Worcestershire sauce

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon pepper



Preparation:

Place flour in a large zip-top plastic bag; add steak cubes. Seal and shake to coat. Remove steak from bag; set aside. Place a large nonstick skillet coated with cooking spray over medium-high heat until hot. Add steak, and cook until browned on all sides. Place steak and remaining ingredients in a 4-quart electric slow cooker; stir well. Cover with lid; cook on high-heat setting 1 hour. Reduce heat to low; cook 6 hours or until meat is done and vegetables are tender.

Nutritional Information:

Calories: 256 (20% from fat), Fat: 5.6g (Saturated 2g, Monounsaturated 2.2g, Polyunsaturated 0.4g), Protein: 26g, Carbohydrate: 26g, Fiber: 6.2g, Cholesterol: 49mg, Iron: 3.4mg, Sodium: 542mg, Calcium: 66mg

References:

University of Minnesota Extension. Slow Cooker Food Safety. Internet:

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