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Crock Pot Cooking

By Glenn J Fournier

A slow cooker, also known as a Crock-Pot®, is a cooking device which consists of a pot made of fired clay and usually glazed, surrounded by a housing, usually metal, containing a thermostatically controlled electric heating element. Most slow cookers only have two settings for power. Slow cookers have loosely fitting lids (often of a see-thru material) to retain moisture and heat.

Cooking in these appliances is done at atmospheric pressure since the lid is not pressure-tight (and indeed is 'sealed' only by condensed vapors and gravity); thus, as long as water remains in the pot, internal temperatures can go no higher than the boiling point of the fluid (212°F or 100°C for water at sea level). The outside temperature of a slow cooker can be expected to exceed the boiling point of water to facilitate heat transfer to the crock and to the food.

Cooking times may vary with the recipe and with the food quantity, but are typically several hours. Cooking is sufficiently slow so that overcooking is not an issue if the food is not removed promptly at the specified time.

No stirring is required (or recommended) since removing the lid during cooking causes significant cooking delays. The lid is an important component because it prevents escape of hot water vapor which would lead to lowering the internal water level, loss of heat and drying out of the contents.

Recipes for these cookers must be adjusted to compensate for the nature of the cooking: often water must be decreased. Most (probably all) come with recipe booklets; many cookbooks with slow cooker recipes are available and there are numerous recipes on the Web. One of the best cookbooks available on the subject is 470 Crock Pot recipes at:

<http://www.linkbrander.com/go/9789>

A small number of cookbooks seek to make complete dishes in a slow cooker using fewer than five

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ingredients while others treat the slow cooker as a serious piece of culinary equipment capable of producing gourmet meals. The long, moist nature of the cooking method allows for lower quality cuts to be used.

The slow cooker is also known as a Crock Pot, a registered trademark of Rival Industries, which first invented the device. The 'Crock Pot' name was also licensed to ConAgra by Rival beginning in 2004, when their Banquet frozen food brand introduced a line of prepared frozen meals called Crock Pot Classics, which consist of a full four or five-serving meal packaged and flash frozen by Banquet, then cooked slow with minimal preparation in a slow cooker. The Crock Pot Classics meal kit includes the meat, vegetables, sauces and potatoes needed for preparing the meal; water is the only other item needed.

Using a slow cooker, temperatures are lower than in many other cooking methods, and cooking times are lengthy. Slow cookers are capable of boiling their contents. Boiling is sufficiently hot to cook all meats, including poultry, which requires the highest internal temperature to be safe for consumption. If the temperature control mechanism is working correctly, and if food is not left to stand more than briefly at room temperature, there are few problems. If the ingredients you start with are frozen, it may take a long time for the pot to reach proper cooking temperature. During this slow heating, microbes in the food can multiply. Heat also kills these organisms. As with any cooking technique, when cooking

frozen food, do not defrost at room temperature. Perpetual stews should not be maintained in slow cookers, as slow cookers do not typically provide sufficient heat to compensate for frequent additions and removals of food; nor do they cook quickly enough to cook newly added food thoroughly before the next withdrawal becomes likely. Removal of the lid lets heat and moisture escape, prolonging cooking time and giving microbes the chance to grow.

Like all electrical appliances, failures (in the electrical wiring or the control mechanisms) can cause problems, including fires. Although slow cookers have few parts that could fail and reports of their failures are rare, unattended slow cookers should be nonetheless treated with respect and caution.

Glenn J Fournier has been cooking for 40 years. He believes the key to successful cooking is to cook by the book. Glenn's Island-Publishing just released 470 Crock Pot Recipes at

<http://www.linkbrander.com/go/9789>

Cut The Take Out

By Lisa Paterson

A long hard day at work. You get home and need dinner. Nothing in the fridge, nothing in the cupboard. Take-out again. The wallet just won't comply much longer.

Re-wind.

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A long hard day at work (sorry can't help with that one). You get home and mmmm, what is that aroma? Dinner! Smells delicious, your mouth is watering.

And no you didn't go to the wrong home and no you are not dreaming. You arranged all this, in a few minutes this morning.

What I won the lotto and hired a personal chef?

Well no, not exactly - you got a Crock Pot. A Crock Pot? Yep, it's a cooker that cooks your food over a slow heat. Put it on in the morning and dinner is ready at night.

Don't think you've got time in the morning. Well you will be pleasantly surprised how quick it can be. Chuck in some veggies (frozen or pre-cut if really short on time), throw some meat on top, pour in a sauce, put on the lid and turn it on low. That's it.

It truly is that easy. And the aroma of dinner when you walk in the door at night, it is sensational - better than any take out.

Happy Crock Cooking

Lisa - "The Crock Cook"

www.a-crock-cook.com

Crock Pot Recipes

and everything else Crock Pot

Find easy to follow

Crock Pot Recipes

, tips and advice by Lisa at www.a-crock-cook.com

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