

Crock Pot Vegetarian Beef Stir Fry



Feed the meat-eaters in your family something new and tasty!

Ever wonder how to feed vegetarians but still make something that your family will eat? My boys are meat-eaters. I praise them for their love of fruits and veggies, too, but without meat, they would not survive. We are not a quinoa-black bean-lentil-tofu-kale-any other alternate to real protein eating crew. We're just not. I don't care how you make it, if it doesn't look like meat, my boys won't touch it.



But, wait! What is this?! Beefless tips?! I was amused, possibly bewildered, and very intrigued. Let's try it in the crock pot! From what I could tell from the package, the end result would be very similar in consistency to meat. Since it didn't actually need to be

cooked through, this product worked great without taking a lot of time (DISCLAIMER: I do not work for Gardein Company, I just liked this product and wanted to share it with you.)

If this coming weekend is bringing guests of all shapes and sizes, and maybe even weird dietary restrictions or preferences, try this vegetarian dish and see if it's a crowd-pleaser for you, too!

Crock Pot Vegetarian Beef Stir Fry

Serves 6 people

4 cups kale, washed, stalks removed

8 oz sliced baby portabello mushrooms

1 bag Gardein Homestyle Beefless Tips

6 oz. can sliced water chestnuts

1/2 c. Soy Vey Veri Veri Teriyaki Sauce



Layer all of the ingredients in the order listed in the recipe. Hit start. It's just that easy!

Put all ingredients in crock pot in order and then pour Teriyaki sauce over everything. Cook on low for 3-4 hours. Serve over brown rice.

Crock Pot Asian Mushrooms



With a change of sauce and topping, these mushrooms went from the ground to being great!

Well fans, I told you I made variations to two of my recipes and I finally have a minute to share. The first variation was for [crock pot asian meatballs](#) and this was the side dish I made to go with it! I've been trying to do some Asian-inspired dinners that don't involve me picking up the phone and ordering fried, fried, sauced and steamed. I also wanted this dish to still be kid-friendly for picky eaters. So I took my favorite [crock pot sassy meatballs](#) and changed it's regional origin and then took my [crock pot garlic mushrooms](#) and added a different sauce and topping!

I learned from a Korean friend of mine that I can make a very basic sauce out of three ingredients, put it on almost anything, and it will taste awesome. And indeed, she was right! I'm also convinced that mushrooms can taste good covered in just about anything.

So I pretty much made these mushrooms according to the original recipe but without all of the seasonings. Add the sauce and sprinkles and be good to go!

Crock Pot Asian Mushrooms

serves 8 as sides

2 lbs white mushrooms, cleaned, stems removed, and quartered

1/4 lb. butter (one stick)

2 T. minced garlic

1 t. onion powder

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

Sauce:

1 T. sesame oil

1 T. soy sauce

1 clove minced garlic

Topping:

1 T. roasted sesame seeds

Put mushrooms in crock pot first, then all of the seasonings and garlic. Put the stick of butter on top as the last step and then put the lid on. No mixing is necessary. Do not add sauce yet. Cook on low for 5-6 hours. Combine the three sauce ingredients in a separate bowl. Remove the mushrooms using a slotted spoon and then toss in the sauce just before serving. If you wish, you can decorate the mushrooms with the roasted sesame seeds just before serving.

Crock Pot Asian Meatballs



Take your favorite foods to a new region with just a little variation!

Well fans, I told you I made variations to two of my recipes and I finally have a minute to share. I've been trying to do some Asian-inspired dinners that don't involve me picking up the phone and ordering fried, fried, sauced and steamed. I also wanted this dish to still be kid-friendly for picky eaters. So I took my favorite [crock pot sassy meatballs](#) and changed it's regional origin!

You can add many different vegetables to this dish, like the pea pods and shredded carrot that I chose, but also try water chestnuts, bamboo shoots, baby corn, or bean sprouts for even more interesting textures and authentic cuisine.

Start by making your own meatballs using 1 lb beef, 1 lb turkey, 2 eggs, 2 cloves minced garlic and 1/2 c. panko breadcrumbs. Do not bake them like you would with the sassy meatballs, you can actually cook the meatballs directly in the sauce for a softer finish to the meat.

Crock Pot Asian Meatballs

serves 6-8

2 lb. meatballs (see above recipe or buy frozen ones)

8 oz. grape jelly

1 jar Heinz chili sauce

1/2 lb. snow peas or sugar snap peas

1 c. shredded carrot (bagged or hand-grated)

1 T. soy sauce

1 T. roasted sesame seeds

Put all solids into the crockpot. Mix jelly, soy sauce and chili sauce together and then pour into crockpot. Cook 4-6 hours on low. Serve over noodles or rice and top with sesame seeds.

Crock Pot Apple Butter Pork



Fork-tender meat and an amazing balance of flavor will leave everyone in your family asking for seconds!

I won't lie, tonight's dinner was fantastic. The perfect mix of textures and flavors. It was easy to make and quick to serve and might become a top 10 favorite very soon. I wasn't even offended when my kids put ketchup on the meat, because hey- they were on their second servings and not complaining!

I'm a big fan of pork country ribs but I feel like it's a complete misnomer. When I think about ribs, I think about meat falling off of a bone. But there isn't a bone in country ribs, it's just sections of meat cut into the shape of ribs and contains a wonderful balance of meat and fat (it tends to cook off, so stop worrying). These are great for pulled pork sandwiches too, for future reference.

When you put all of these ingredients in the crock pot, you might worry about not seeing enough liquid- do not add any! The meat and the apples will ooze with flavor and moisture and it will all work out just fine. My apologies for using "ooze" to describe cooking, but when I think about cooking low and slow, it's totally an ooze, not a rush of flavor. Ooooooze.

This is a great recipe for any time of year, but especially great in the fall if you can get fresh, local apples and make your own apple butter. But there is no shame in buying it pre-made and ready to go... the outcome will be very similar!

Crock Pot Apple Butter Pork

Serves 8

2 lbs country ribs

2 gala apples, cut off the core and then into thick slices

1 sweet onion, cut into half and then into slices

1/2 cup chunky apple butter (chunky apple sauce will work too but the seasonings won't be as intense)

4 sprigs of fresh thyme

Put meat in the bottom of crock pot, then layer the rest of the flavors. Cook on high 3-4 hours. Meat will be fork-tender and apples and onions should be soft, maybe a little mushy, but not disintegrating. It's good if the leaves fall off the thyme- please do not ingest the twigs. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Garlic Mushrooms



It's quite possible that these little fungi will become your new favorite side dish. Consider yourself warned.

Snow Day #7. I've been using my crock pot for [breakfast](#), for [lunch](#), and for [dinner](#). Somehow the invasion of snow has worked up some serious appetites after playing outside. To feed my little monsters, I planned on making pasta last night (no, not in a crock pot... just the normal boil water and add pasta) but I wanted a nice side dish to go with it. I bought a huge container of mushrooms last week, but then forgot what I was going to make, so I decided that they would make the

perfect side dish for our pasta dinner.

Mushrooms are one of my favorite vegetables. They are all fine and good raw, dipped in ranch, or marinated. And they come in so many different varieties! Don't believe me? Take a trip to your favorite international grocer and see if you can even identify all of those little fungi. I like enoki in miso soup or baby portabellos in [beef stroganoff](#), but I used regular, white mushrooms in today's recipe. They are a pretty standard item for me to buy, since they are sturdy, take a long time to spoil, and can be added in so many different ways.

This dish is really easy to make, but be warned– you can fill the crock pot with mushrooms and six hours later, you will have about a quarter of a pot of food left! So plan for more than you think you want. They also work well added to spaghetti sauce or used as a layer in vegetable lasagna. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Garlic Mushrooms (serves 8 as sides)

2 lbs white mushrooms, cleaned, stems removed, and quartered

1/4 butter (one stick)

2 T. minced garlic

1 T. dried dill

1 t. onion powder

1/2 t. paprika

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

2 sprigs fresh thyme, just the leaves

parmesan cheese

Put mushrooms in crock pot first, then all of the seasonings and garlic. Put the stick of butter on top as the last step and then put the lid on. No mixing is necessary. Do not add parmesan cheese yet. Just don't. Cook on low for 5-6 hours. Remove the mushrooms using a slotted spoon and then decorate with grated or shredded parmesan cheese just before serving. If you wish, you can save the liquid in the crock pot for mushroom gravy.

Crock Pot Chicken and Artichokes



This easy and delicious dish can be made with just a few items from your pantry!

Happy Valentine's Day, crock pot lovers! I hope you've enjoyed the day and if you care nothing about this Hallmark holiday, I

hope you had a fabulous Saturday.

I thawed out some chicken a couple days ago and didn't decide what to do with it until today. I wanted something easy that even the kids would eat, and didn't want to go to the store to get any supplies.

One of my favorite pantry items that I always keep stocked is a small jar of artichoke hearts in a marinade. They are great on fresh salads, complement tomato-based sauces on pasta, or create a delectable antipasto plate when you need a quick appetizer. The dressing is also a fabulous sauce.

I also had a basket of fresh cherry tomatoes from a local farm that I needed to use before they went soft. Even in North Carolina, it's cold at this time of year, but I love that I can get fresh tomatoes that were greenhouse grown.

With a few basic ingredients you really can put together a delicious dinner without needing a trip to the grocery store.
Happy Love Day!

5-6 boneless skinless chicken thighs

1 pint cherry tomatoes

6 oz jar of artichoke hearts in marinade (DO NOT DRAIN!)

3 cloves garlic

1/2 sweet onion, sliced

Put all ingredients in crock pot and cook on high for 4 hours. Serve alone as an entrée or over pasta or rice.

Crock Pot Cream of Celery and Leek Soup



Crock Pot Celery and Leek Soup

Most weeks, I have a game plan for all of our meals and a grocery list to organize my trip. I know which nights will be crockpot meals, which nights will be leftovers, and I even anticipate which nights I'll probably be too tired to cook!

But I started this week a day too late. I didn't have my grocery list set and I wasn't quite sure what was for dinner, so I opened the fridge and played a little Food Network-style game show called, "what the hell can I cook with these three ingredients?"

This is part of the amazement of crockpot cooking. With the right balance of seasonings and time, dinner can be a full meal without a lot of struggle.

Tonight's cream of celery and leek soup turned out beautifully. Some of my Facebook followers have been asking for easy soups that are low calorie, too. This dish is very low carb and adding the last step really thickens it up to make it hearty. I even used 1% milk and it still tastes rich

and creamy.

As long as you keep basic ingredients in your pantry and an open mind for culinary adventure, you can make delicious dishes without needing unusual ingredients. I'll still be going to the grocery store tomorrow, though!

Crock Pot Cream of Celery and Leek Soup

3 Bunches of celery hearts, sliced (about 8-10 cups)

1 lb frozen sliced leeks (or fresh if you can find them)

32 oz Chicken or vegetable broth

14 oz Can sweet corn, cream style

3 Cloves garlic, whole

1 t. Dried dill

1/4 t. Nutmeg

2 Bay leaves

1 t. Salt

1 t. Black pepper

2 T. Corn starch

2 Cups cold milk

Add everything except the last two ingredients to your crock pot. Cook on high for 3-4 hours or until all vegetables are soft. Remove bay leaves. Use immersion blender and purée soup. Dissolve the cornstarch in the cold milk and then add to crock pot. Continue cooking one more hour on high so soup can thicken.

Crock Pot Beet Borscht

Dre's got nothing on me—my beets are fresh! Ha! Get it? See what I did there.



Beet borscht tastes great with a few boiled potatoes and a scoop of cold sour cream.

There is nothing that makes me think of the my family history more than a steaming hot bowl of neon pink soup. No, this isn't a serving of chemical warfare, it's a fresh and sweet, soothing bowl of beet borscht. My grandma still makes this and at most Jewish Deli's you can usually find it on the menu right next to corned beef, chopped liver and matzah balls. What can I say? My roots are authentic and so is my cuisine. Except grandma never made this dish in the crock pot!

Now if this was truly home cooking, I would use fresh beets, but I've found that the canned version works just as well and

the pink juice adds a certain flavor feature as well. Grandma taught me to cut sliced beets into strips instead of buying the canned variety of matchsticks. Somehow the matchstick ones are too mushy. (According to grandma, of course.)

Authentically, I would hand slice some cabbage, but I love the fine style of angel hair cabbage that I can purchase at my grocery store. It cooks up quicker and doesn't contrast the texture of the beets as much.



Keep a few of these items on hand in your pantry and you can have beet borscht anytime you want!

If you make this dish with fresh beets, just clean, peel and shred them before throwing them in the crock pot. The taste is very similar to this recipe, but the beautiful pink broth cannot be matched! It truly is extraordinary. But that pink color will most likely stain your cutting board. And your fingers. And your countertops, before you even realize the glow has been dripping!

This soup can be made vegetarian or meat-based. In fact, try cooking down beef bones or chicken bones to make your broth

instead of using store bought. I know, I know... this meal is so “processed”, but hey, it’s a weeknight, and sometimes even the Crock Pot Queen needs a a quick meal to fix.

Give this a try and keep an open mind. Put on those Dre headphones and drop the beat. But not the beet. It will probably stain.

Crock Pot Beet Borscht

Serves 8

2 15 oz. cans of sliced beets (do not drain)

1/2 sweet onion, sliced thin

1 package finely sliced cabbage (approx. 6 cups)

2 bay leaves

2 cloves of garlic, chopped

1 32 oz. box vegetarian stock

8 redskin potatoes

8 T. sour cream

Slice the onion and put in the crock pot with the cabbage, bay leaves, and garlic cloves. Drain the cans of beets into the crock pot and then cut the sliced beets into strips. Add stock and cook on high for 3-4 hours. Clean and quarter the potatoes and bowl separately. To each serving of soup, add a few chunks of boiled potatoes and a dollop of sour cream. Borscht is also refreshingly delicious served cold.

Crock Pot Cheese-Stuffed Meatballs



Already looking good!

While on vacation over the holidays, we stayed at the Happy Pelican, a wonderful beach house on the North Carolina coast. I love the delight of staying somewhere with a fully-stocked kitchen AND a beautiful view. My sister-in-law and I figured out a week's worth of menus, split the to do list, and prepped easy meals to enjoy that required minimal kitchen time and maximum beach time. It was so much easier to dine all together at the house instead of trying to coordinate eating out!



Cheese-Stuffed Meatball
Sub, broiled to
perfection!

But with eight healthy appetites to satisfy, we needed to cook mass quantity. By the end of the week, we were down to hamburger meat, string cheese and a few wrinkly vegetables. Easy enough! Just what I needed for these cheese-stuffed meatballs. It takes a little more handy work than our normal crock pot meals, but it was delicious! The kids loved the meatballs and the adults enjoyed meatball subs broiled to a crusty perfection.



Forget the bun and just enjoy the cheese-stuffed meatballs!

If you go on vacation and the house isn't well-equipped with small kitchen appliances, I highly suggest bringing your crock pot along. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Cheese-Stuffed Meatballs

Serves 8-10

2 lbs ground beef

2 eggs

1 c. panko bread crumbs

1/2 c. shredded parmesan

1 c. shredded carrots

2 T. Fresh parsley, chopped

1/2 sweet onion, diced

1 32 oz. jar spaghetti sauce

6 individually-wrapped string cheese

4 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

8 hoagie buns

Unwrap the string cheese and cut each log into 5 pieces (30 pieces total). Set the cheese aside. You are going to make approx. 30 meatballs. Mix together the meat, carrots, onion, eggs, parsley, parmesan, and panko. The mixture should not be liquidy. If it is, add a little more bread crumbs. Eggs are not always the same size (did you know that?!). Take about a golf-ball sized portion and roll into a ball. Flatten it between your palms. Place a cut piece of string cheese in the middle of the patty and then carefully form the ball back around the cheese. You want the cheese to be completely surrounded by the meatball mixture. Place it in the crock pot and repeat 29 more times, approximately, or until the meat mixture is gone.

Wash your hands. Don't be gross.

Pour the jar of spaghetti sauce across all of the meatballs

and then cook on high for 3-4 hours or on low for 6 hours. Your sauce will be a little more watery when it's done because of all of the juices escaping the meat and veggies. These meatballs are now ready to serve.

If you want to make meatball subs, put 3-4 meatballs in each hoagie bun, cover with some shredded cheese and place on a cookie sheet. Broil in the oven until the cheese is melted and starting to brown, but not burnt. That would be gross.

Cooked meatballs will fill refrigerate well and freeze well, but be careful reheating as the cheese may ooze out. It will all still taste delicious, it just might not be as pretty.