

Crock Pot Butternut Squash Soup

I used to think that fall was my favorite season. No- not because of pumpkin spice lattes. Ewww. I grew up in Ohio, so October was all about football, pumpkins, apple picking, wearing hoodies and wondering if I was going to need snow boots with my Halloween costume. Fast forward to my current location that includes a beach, palm trees, and mid-day highs at almost 90 degrees. So while my childhood season included colorful fleece jackets and changing leaves, my current reality is more like flip flops and sunscreen until December (not that I'm complaining!!!).



Fall flavors are delicious... and I don't mean pumpkin spice everything!

So I'm bringing fall into my home in as many subtle ways as I can. Many of my fans are celebrating the Jewish High Holidays season as well this month and I thought this recipe would be great to include for your festival meals. Cooking it low and slow while you go to services means that there is little prep

to do before your guests arrive.

Let's talk a little more about quick prep— I often like to use whole foods but there are two recommendations I have for you.

1. Buy the pre-cut butternut squash. It is in the produce section and is sooooo much easier than trying to chop up a fresh one. I like to use the whole squash when I'm roasting it, but I don't mind having someone else do the dirty work on this vegetable. You can also use frozen butternut squash if that's more readily available for you.

2. I use BONE BROTH in this recipe instead of just chicken broth. It adds a little more robust flavor and also about 7 grams of protein per serving (so the leftovers make a great, filling lunch!).

You can get creative with toppings for this soup. Try croutons, dried cranberries, crumbled goat cheese, fresh dill, or a dollop of sour cream. I'm showing it to you without accessories because I didn't even wait until dinner to ladle some into a coffee cup and slurp it down. You know, as a taste test. As a skeptic, I needed to sample it for research. But I used a big spoon with a handle on the side.

Crock Pot Butternut Squash Soup

Serves 8-10 people

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 6-7 hours

2 lbs. butternut squash, diced into 1/2 to 1 inch cubes

1 large gala apple, cored and cut into chunks, skins left on

1/2 c. caramelized onions

1 32 oz. carton chicken bone broth

1/2 t. [all-seasons salt](#)

1 t. smoked paprika

1 t. dried dill

-- and then...

1 pt. heavy cream

3 T. honey

Put first list of ingredients in crock pot and stir. Cook on low for 6 hours. Using an [immersion blender](#), puree soup until all butternut squash chunks are gone. Add heavy cream and honey and stir until combined. Cook on low for 30 minutes more and then serve. Try toppings such as croutons, dried cranberries, crumbled goat cheese, fresh dill, or a dollop of sour cream.

Crock Pot Chicken and Dumplings



Homemade comfort food is a great way to enjoy family time on a busy school night!

It's Back to School time once again and my schedule is totally in chaos. I am never going to get used to that 6 am alarm and the child zombies I have to wake up for school. Coffee has yet to be made or consumed before the school bus comes, so I feel like it's a mini celebrations every morning when we get to the corner on time!

But there is something so indulgent about the 7 am hour now... it's quiet. I can take just a few minutes to get all the food into the crock pot and have dinner started for the day. If your chaos continues until you go to work/gym/meetings/etc. you can prep parts of this meal the night before, to make it even easier. Cut the veggies and refrigerate. I'm a big fan of measuring out all of the seasonings and putting them in [one of these](#) so you can just dump them in the morning with much less effort. (THIS IS ALSO A GREAT TRAVEL TIP– PRE-MEASURE SEASONINGS AND STORE IN [THESE CONTAINERS](#) FOR MEALS YOU ARE MAKING AWAY FROM HOME!) I'm also in the habit of using [crock pot liners](#) so I don't have to even deal with a messy clean-up. After dinner, I just throw the bag away and wipe out the crock pot... this is a huge benefit when I'm using the same crock pot multiple days in a row.

You can vary what veggies you put in this dish; we like carrot and onions, but you can also add cut up celery, frozen peas or green beans if you'd like. It will make the dish more like a pot pie, but there is nothing wrong with that! Having no veggies is totally acceptable too!

I try to cook from scratch, but I did opt to use one cream soup in this dish. It just helps with the flavor and thickening the sauce. If you prefer, you can buy [organic concentrated soup](#) to keep the ingredient list limited to words you can pronounce. You can also substitute chicken stock for the water, but it's not necessary. If you do use boxed stock, I would recommend leaving out the teaspoon of salt.

This dish is great for a weeknight meal that also doubles as delicious leftovers for lunch. It also freezes well, so go ahead and make a full batch and save the excess for another time. Hope your Back to School chaos is manageable and those early alarm clocks someday get a little easier. At least dinner is set to be low and slow!

Crock Pot Chicken and Dumplings

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 4-5 hours

Serves: 6-8

1 medium sweet onion, chopped

1/2 lb baby carrots, cut into thirds

1 t. [prepped minced garlic](#) or 1 clove, minced

1 t. dried basil

1 t. dried thyme

1 t. dried dill

1 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

2 bay leaves

1 can cream of mushroom soup

3 c. water

1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs (approx 4 pieces)

For dumplings:

2 c. flour

1 T. baking powder

1 t. salt

1 T. softened butter

3/4 cold milk mixed with 1/4 cup cold water

1 t. dried parsley flakes

1 t. dried dill

Put veggies, seasonings, condensed soup and water into the crock pot and give it a stir to combine. Place chicken pieces in next and push down to submerge as much as possible. Cook on high for 4 hours. Remove chicken and shred in a bowl, then add back to crock pot and stir. Set to high for another hour and bring back to a simmer while you make the dumpling dough. Combine all dumpling ingredients in a separate bowl and then slowly drop by tablespoon into the crock pot. Do this step quickly so the crock pot retains as much heat as possible. After all dumplings are dropped, put lid on a cook for 20-30 minutes. Dumplings should plump up and be soft and moist. Serve 1-2 dumplings with each bowl of dish.

Crock Pot Chicken Marsala



I feel like I should just start this post the same way as my last... “I recently riddled my fans on [Facebook](#) about whether they would want a crock pot chicken marsala or [crock pot chana masala recipe](#)... and of course, you guys asked for both! So as promised, I have created both recipes and I’m sharing them with you this week.”

I thought it was fascinating to hear how many of you liked chicken marsala, but that it took too much work to make. That sounded like a great challenge! Nothing delicious needs to be over-complicated. But crock pot chicken can have varying results– consider that my warning– especially with breast meat. I know my crock pots well enough that we have a relationship, I know how much time it takes to get up to temperature, and when they are just too hot to mess with.

I opted to use thin-sliced boneless, skinless chicken breasts for this dish and to cook for a shorter amount of time in order to retain the moisture in the meat. Chicken must be cooked through, so if you are not already aware of how moody your crock can be, you might want to be home when you cook this dish for the first time to ensure that it doesn’t dry out. Like any relationship, it takes a while to figure out. But it’s worth it.

Also, I recommend using a slicer [LIKE THIS](#) to save time with the prep work. Yes, a simple knife could take care of slicing the mushrooms, but I really like how this device makes everything a consistent size. You can also use it for eggs (duh!), strawberries, kiwis, and soft cheese.



Crock Pot Chicken Marsala

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 4-6 hours

1.5 lbs thin-sliced boneless, skinless chicken breast

4 T. salted butter, cubed

8 oz. baby portabella mushrooms, cleaned and sliced

2 cloves garlic, minced

8 oz. marsala cooking wine

1/2 c. cold water

3 T. corn starch

Place chicken breasts in the crock pot and dot with chunks of the cold butter. Put mushrooms in next and spread across the chicken. Sprinkle with the garlic. Slowly pour in the cooking wine on top of everything, but not so fast as to wash all the mushrooms and garlic off of the chicken. Cook on low for 4-6 hours then remove the chicken from the pot using a slotted spoon. In a separate bowl, dissolve the corn starch in the water and then add it to the liquid in the pot and stir. Add the chicken back to the pot and cook an additional hour. Serve over wide egg noodles.

Crock Pot Chana Masala



So I recently riddled my fans on [Facebook](#) about whether they would want a crock pot chicken marsala or crock pot chana masala recipe... and of course, you guys asked for both! So as promised, I have created both recipes and I'm sharing them with you this week. First up, is chana masala (even though I made the other recipe first!), but since that is the smell filling

my house, it is the first to write up and share. It's like the amazing fumes are traveling through my body and out my fingertips as I type.

You might recognize this dish from your local Indian buffet. With just a few ingredients, but plenty of seasonings and flavor, it's a great side dish. Served with rice and naan bread, it makes a fantastic dinner. I think it's a great introduction to Indian food too because it's not too potent or unfamiliar in flavor. I would still consider myself a novice with cooking Indian food and I much prefer to go out and eat someone else's delicious recipes than my own, but sometimes it's nice to try something new and customize it yourself.

(I really like the [Simply Organic herbs](#) from Amazon. I think they are affordable and a quality product. I've linked each ingredient so you can buy them if you'd like to use what I use, too. I do not work with them directly, but I do use them consistently.)

So here's my go at crock pot chana masala. I hope you are inspired to try cooking something new, too!

Crock Pot Chana Masala

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 6 hours

Serves: 8-10 people

1 28 oz. can chick peas, drained

1 28 oz. can diced tomatoes, NOT DRAINED

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 yellow onion, diced (= about 1/2 cup)

1/2 t. [ground coriander](#)

1/2 t. [cumin powder](#)

1/2 t. [turmeric powder](#)

1 t. [garam masala powder](#)

1 t. minced fresh ginger

1 T. fresh cilantro leaves, sliced

1 lime, cut into wedges

Put all ingredients in crock pot and mix together. Cook on low for 6 hours. Serve with a lime wedge to squeeze for flavor, a side of basmati rice and naan bread for a complete meal.

Crock Pot Stuffed Green Peppers



This recipe is all about using up LEFTOVERS. I don't mean the extra serving from the [Crock Pot Celery and Leek Soup](#) you made over this cold weekend so you can have a delicious hot lunch to start the week, or the corner pieces of [Crock Pot Vegetarian Lasagna](#) that you purposefully didn't scoop out so you could nibble on the cheesy goodness again after the kids are in bed, I mean the small containers of random single ingredients that you can't bring yourself to throw out.

Stuffed peppers are the perfect solution to this ongoing drama of being single. Ingredient, that is.

I did make lasagna last week and didn't have a chance to make homemade sauce, so I bough (gasp!) a big jar of chunky spaghetti sauce. I also rolled sushi and had one sad bowl of white rice left. So I stopped by the store and picked up a few fresh peppers— because even though it was a separate trip, I rationalized that I was actually doing a service by cleaning out the fridge.

DISCLAIMER: this next statement is not political, religious,

or meant to have any greater meaning in life. I don't really believe in gender... of bell peppers. That's right, there's a myth that you can judge the gender of a pepper based on the number of bumps on the bottom of the bell. Male peppers are a tripod with three bumps and females are more voluptuous and display four proud bumps instead. Farmers and cooks have tried to determine if there is a taste variety, increase or decrease in the number of seeds, or what causality actually exists to determine the gender, but I have yet to see scientific proof on this topic. Lack of proof does not discourage me from believing that once again, we can say that size does matter and so do the number of bumps. I think they are called male and female just as an easy way to differentiate, but that there isn't actually a gender connection to the bells, since they grow the same seeds and reproduce in the same way.

I prefer to use the female, four bump variety, when I make stuffed peppers for no greater meaning than I think they stand up easier in the crock pot. If you are going to cut them in half before stuffing, then it doesn't really make a difference, but I like to stuff my peppers whole. When they start to get soft, the three bump chumps tend to tippy over and the contents and liquids spill out. So if you can, try to find full, robust "females" to stuff with your meaty goodness. (I HAVE A FEELING THAT I SHOULD REPEAT THAT DISCLAIMER AGAIN HERE, YOU NAUGHTY LITTLE READERS.)

A normal serving would be one full pepper, but I like to make three peppers and then a few extra meatballs. That's right... I turn my leftovers into leftovers. Sometimes, the kids just prefer the meatballs to the peppers and that's fine with me, too. My oldest son tells me he doesn't like peppers or onions, but doesn't realize they are already chopped up and cooked in the meatball. He tells me that dinner was "so good" in the same voice that my nana used to say those words. And then she would suck in air, like it was grabbing up the last morsel of goodness from that bite.

Crock Pot Stuffed Green Peppers

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 5 hours

Serves: 3-4 people

3 green bell peppers, with four bumps on the bottom

1 lb. 80/20 ground beef

1/4 sweet onion, finely chopped = about 1/2 cup total

2 c. cooked [white medium-grain rice](#)

1 t. dried basil leaves

1/2 t. ground celery seed

2 T. tomato paste

2 c. marinara or spaghetti sauce, chunky preferably

Cut top inch off each bell pepper and scoop out the seeds and pithy parts. Cut the green parts off the top part and finely chop. Mix beef, chopped pepper and onion, seasonings, rice, and tomato paste. Stand peppers up in the crock pot and using your hand, gently fill each pepper pot with meat. Push mixture into the sides so that air is removed and maximum capacity is reached. Use any remaining mixture to make meatballs; place them in the crock pot surrounding the peppers. Pour marinara sauce over the stuffed peppers and meatballs. Cook on low for 5 hours. Serve immediately (overcooked peppers will fall apart and lose all remaining texture).

Crock Pot Mississippi Pot Roast



Soft, tender, and full of flavor– this Mississippi pot roast may become your family's new favorite dinner!

Let me begin with a disclaimer: this is not my recipe. I don't even know who created this recipe. I found about a gazillion posts about Mississippi Pot Roast and they all call for the same stuff in the same way.

So why am I posting it here? Because I like you. And I think you like me. And if you trust my opinion on all things crock-pottery, then I wanted to try this internet sensation for myself and share it with you.

The prep work for this dinner is non-existent. Not kidding. It took longer to pose my cute little pepperoncinis for this picture, than it took to get everything in the post. (Did anyone else just think dirty thoughts when I said “cute little pepperoncinis”? No? Oh, ok. Yeah, me neither.)



So after two minutes of work, dinner is ready for tonight. The raving reviews are ALL true, this dish might just be the newest family favorite— to cook and eat.

Not only is it easy, but for those of you that work ALL DAY, this is a great tender meat dish that goes low and slow for 8 hours. If your crock pot switches to warm, then that’s even better for you commuters. You got this. A real dinner that won’t be overcooked or dry when you get home. I know... promises, promises. But it’s true!



Just a few simple ingredients will turn this meat from bland to WOW!

My family ate well, enjoyed the soft, tender pot roast, and didn’t even ask for ketchup. Come on, people! You know that means it had crazy delicious flavor if my seven year old didn’t cover it in red goo! Enjoy. ☐

(Note: You can opt to only use half of the packet of au jus gravy mix if you want to cut down on salt. It will still taste great!)

Crock Pot Mississippi Pot Roast

Serves 6-8

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 8 hours

2-3 lb pot roast

1 packet Ranch Dip (1 oz dried mix)

1 packet Au Jus Gravy Mix (0.6 oz dried mix)

1 stick butter

6 whole pepperoncini peppers, no added juice

Put the pot roast in the bottom of the crock pot. Shake dried mixes out on top of meat. Place stick of butter in middle of roast, then surround with pepperoncini. DO NOT ADD WATER. Cook on low for 8 hours. Shred or slice to serve, as sandwiches or with pasta, rice, or potatoes.

Crock Pot Cream of Mushroom Soup (#2)



Get ready for fall flavors with this easy to make, robust mushroom soup!

On the cusp of summer turning into fall, I'm already getting excited about the next season of recipes. I'm not a pumpkin spice anything, but I love pulling in the flavors of butternut squash, roasted root vegetables, and hearty seasonings.

Last night, I made a cream of mushroom soup just as a way of using up leftover vegetables that were starting to age in the refrigerator. I figured I would freeze some or share with friends, but it was certainly better than throwing things out. Turns out— this soup was a nice variety to my normal [Crock Pot Cream of Mushroom Soup](#)! With just a little change up of flavors and ratios, this soup was a little more hearty and robust.

As I wrote in the first mushroom soup recipe, this doesn't need to be an exact recipe with precise measurements. Also-

using a [hand blender](#) does give this soup a lovely smooth consistency. Try it and enjoy this soup as a transition to fall!

Crock Pot Cream of Mushroom Soup

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 6 hours

Serves: 8-10 people

1 lb fresh mushrooms (button, portobello or shiitake or a combination!)

4 stalks celery, cleaned and diced

1 large parsnip, peeled and diced

1/2 c. [caramelized onions](#)

3 cloves garlic

4 c. broth (chicken or vegetable)

1/2 teaspoon EACH: celery seed, salt, dried dill weed, black pepper

1 t. dried parsley

2 c. cold milk

2 T. corn starch

Put all ingredients EXCEPT milk and corn starch into crock pot and stir. Cook on high for 5 hours. Puree with hand blender. Dissolve corn starch into cold milk and add to crock pot and stir. Heat 1 additional hour on high and then serve.

Crock Pot Miso Soup



Restaurant quality soup,
only easier, cheaper and
more delicious!

Why go out to eat when you can stay in?! This week I'm working on Asian inspired dishes that are easy to make and taste like take-out- only healthier! Today's soup is super easy. So much so, that you should never actually order it in a restaurant, it's so much better to make at home. I add a couple more vegetables to my miso soup so that it's a more filling appetizer or the start of a great main dish. You can add thin egg noodles, vermicelli noodles, or rice to this soup to make it a complete meal in itself. Don't let the tofu fool you; this isn't a crunchy, earthy food, it's the same thing you order in a restaurant, only better for you! Enjoy. ☐

Crock Pot Miso Soup

Serves 6-8

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 6 hours

6 c. water

4 T. white miso paste

1 zucchini, cut horizontally and then sliced into half moons
2 cloves garlic
1 12 oz package, extra firm tofu, drained and cut into small cubes
1/2 c. green onions (about 3 inches of the white/green parts), sliced into rings
1 100g package of enoki mushrooms, cut off the base

Put water and miso paste into crock pot and stir until dissolved. Add zucchini, garlic, and tofu. Cook on low for 6 hours. Add green onions and enoki mushrooms about 20 minutes before cook time is complete. Serve immediately.

Crock Pot Vegetarian Refried Beans



With just a few ingredients, you can add a rich side dish to Taco Tuesday- on any day

of the week!

In our house, every Tuesday is TACO TUESDAY! The kids have become so accustomed to it, that sometimes I like to mess with them and make tacos on the “wrong” day of the week. If we eat something different on a Tuesday, they are a little disappointed... but if we eat tacos on any night other than Tuesday, it’s almost unacceptable. I’ll say “it’s Taco Tuesday on Wednesday!” and they respond, “we can’t eat tacos on Wednesdays!” “But why??” I ask. “Because we’d have to call it Waco Wednesday!” they would shout with despair.

Oh trust me, that scenario is totally legit. It happens. Scripted or not, that’s how it plays out every freaking time.

But this week is an exception, because it’s Cinco de Mayo on a Thursday. That’s an unwritten acceptable negotiation and my hellions are ok with moving the taco consumption in order to celebrate another nation’s announcement of victory in war. (Not to be confused with Mexico’s Independence Day, that’s September 16– which is also not a Tuesday this year.)

My mini-me’s could practically prepare taco night by themselves– hard shells and tortillas. Sour cream. Shredded cheese. Lettuce, tomato, onions, and olives. Jalapeños and [this ridiculous taco sauce](#) for mommy. Homemade tomatillo salsa verde, too. And then ground beef or chicken. By the book, typical American-style taco night. Extra napkins, of course.



The perfect side dish
for your next fiesta!

But since tomorrow is a celebration, I wanted to introduce a new dish into taco night. Growing up, a trip to Taco Bell always included way too many tacos and a side of pintos and cheese. What's that, you ask? A bowl of refried pinto beans and a handful of soft, shredded cheddar cheese. They put a lid on it and by the time you filled your fountain drink and sat down to scarf, the cheese would be gooey and melted perfectly. Ok, it was crap quality, but the taste was so good!

So here's my attempt at recreating a mouth-watering memory and introducing it to my family. Let's all celebrate our little victories— not just the big war-type ones. Sometimes sitting down to eat as a family is a victory in itself. Ole!

Crock Pot Vegetarian Refried Beans

Serves: 8-12

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 8-10 hours

1 lb. dried pinto beans

1 c. [crock pot caramelized onions](#)

3 cloves garlic, peeled

2 t. cumin

2 t. salt

6 c. water

Put all ingredients in crock pot and give it a stir. The water level should cover everything. Cook on high 8-10 hours or low 12 hours. Remove excess water that isn't absorbed, not do not discard. Puree everything in the crock pot using [an immersion blender](#). Add reserved water 1 tablespoon at a time until desired smooth consistency is reached. Serve immediately with toppings like shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, jalapeños, bacon bits, or use inside of a taco or burrito.

Crock Pot Mushroom-Spinach Soup with Middle Eastern Spices



So it's Saturday and I've got a date with this really fungi... haha, get it?! I'm making a mushroom soup!

This version is an adaptation of [a recipe from the New York Times](#), it is not my original creation. But I saw the recipe online and thought... this looks delicious, but has WAY TOO MANY steps. Let's make it easy and throw it all in the [crock pot](#) instead. And guess what. Yup. It works just perfectly without the extra hassle and dirty dishes.

There are so many wonderful varieties of mushrooms, you can change up the the recipe a million different times for different texture and flavor results. Play around with it. I have increased the quantity of seasonings after reading reviews saying that it needed a little more umphh. I don't think that's a technical culinary term, but neither is WOW or YUM and those are the things I'm going for here! I've added links for you to my [favorite brand of seasonings](#), just in case you don't already have these items on hand.

Try this soup with a dollop of plain greek yogurt and some naan or pita bread. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Mushroom-Spinach Soup with Middle Eastern Spices

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 7 hours

Serves: 8 people

~1-1.5 lbs fresh mushrooms- cleaned and diced=about 5-6 cups

(try button, cremini, portobello, Baby Bella, etc)

1/4 lb shallot (one) finely diced

2 T. tomato paste

3 T. salted butter

2 t. dried [thyme](#)

1 1/2 t. [coriander](#)

2 t. [cinnamon](#)

2 t. [cumin](#)

1 t. salt

1/2 t. freshly cracked black pepper

5 cups water

5 ounces fresh baby spinach

1 lime

plain greek yogurt (optional)

Dice mushrooms and shallots and stir together in [crock pot](#). Add seasonings, tomato paste, and butter. Pour water in, but do not stir. Cook on low for 6 hours- you may lift the lid and give it a stir after the butter appears to be completely melted.

After 6 hours, add the spinach and squeeze about 2 T. of fresh lime juice into the crock pot, give it all a stir, and heat on low for up to one more hour... or until spinach is wilted. Serve

with a dollop of plain greek yogurt.