

Crock Pot Apricot Pork Chops



It's time for some more of that other white meat. I've got my sides ready, all I needed to do was check the freezer for some meat. I have just over a pound of thin pork chops and now dinner is ready. No really, in less than 5 minutes, dinner will be set for tonight. I don't want to turn on the oven and I

don't even want to make any gravy, I just want something yummy with very little effort.

Sound good to you, too? Good. Enjoy!

1- 1.5 lb thin pork chops, frozen

1 10 oz. jar of apricot jam (ALL fruit, no fillers)

4 oz. white wine

Lay pork chops flat in crock pot. Cover meat with jam. Pour white wine around the edges, not on jam. Cook on low for 4 hours.

If you don't like pork, try this with chicken thighs instead. Cook for 6 hours on low.

Crock Pot Gumbo



I opened up my weekly CSA delivery and was so excited to see the ripe, fragrant produce. One thing in particular caught my attention– OKRA. The first thing I thought of was some hot, spicy gumbo. I think half of what I unpacked is going to end up in the gumbo– okra, tomatoes, basil, corn, green pepper... now

if only I stopped at a farm for some chicken and then headed to the coast for some shrimp, but I guess I'll have to buy those at the grocery store.

Gumbo is a perfect recipe for the crock pot because it needs to simmer for a long time to fuse all those flavors together. Cut your veggies into small pieces so you can have a bit of each morsel in your mouth! This soup would also freeze really well, so make the gumbo for dinner this week and then enjoy all these fresh treats again later this fall when they aren't so available.

This soup can also be made vegetarian if you leave out the chicken, sausage and shrimp. I'd amp up the amount of veggies though and maybe get a little more okra, so that this tastes more robust and unique than just vegetarian vegetable soup. You can also use Morningstar Farms chicken strips (fake meat) if you'd like to add some protein. Enjoy!

2 boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into 1/2 inch cubes

1/2 lb. okra, sliced

1 c. of corn (cut off of fresh ears)

1/2 sweet onion, chopped

1 green pepper, seeded and chopped

3-4 ripe, sweet tomatoes, seeded and chopped

3 carrots, peeled and sliced thin

2 stalks celery, sliced

4-6 leaves fresh basil, chopped

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 t. salt

1 t. black pepper

1/2 t. cayenne pepper

1/2 t. paprika

1/2 t. chili powder

1 T. parsley

2 T. Worcestershire sauce

2 T. Tabasco sauce

2 c. water

3 pork sausages, cooked and sliced

1/2 lb shrimp, peeled and cleaned

2 c. cooked white rice

Combine all vegetables in crock pot. Add liquid ingredients. Sprinkle with all seasonings. Place chicken pieces on top of mixture next. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Add shrimp, sausage and cooked white rice and cook for an additional 1 hour on low.

Crock Pot Beef Stew

So after the amazing stroganoff last week, somehow I still wanted to make more beef. (I think we had BBQ chicken one too many times over the holiday weekend.) So even though it is summer, I thought some hearty beef stew would satisfy my craving for red meat. The nice part about this meal and the hot weather is that a small serving is enough to satisfy and you can use local produce to really enrich the flavors of the stew. I am adding some extra vegetables to my stew that are in season, ripe and fresh right now. Check out your local farmer's market and see what vegetables look good to you. Enjoy!

1 lb. beef, cut into stew meat

1 c. baby carrots

4 stalks celery, cut into 1-inch sections

3 potatoes, skins left on, cut into small chunks

1 small onion, cut into small chunks

1 medium zucchini, cut into 1-inch sections

1 ear of corn, cut kernels off the cob

4-6 oz. fresh green beans, cut into 1-inch sections

2 c. water

3 cloves garlic, chopped

1/2 t. celery seed

1/2 t. paprika

1 T. parsley

1/2 t. salt

1 t. black pepper

To finish: 1 T. corn starch dissolved in 1/3 c. cold water

Put all ingredients into the crock pot and give it all a stir. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Add water with dissolved corn starch and heat for 1/2 hour on high. Remove bay leaves before serving.

Crock Pot Southern Style Greens



Living in the South, I have learned that I can no longer assume that my vegetables are vegetarian. It seems like every restaurant I go to uses delicious savory meats like bacon, sausage or ham to season our side dishes. I always

like bacon on a side salad without any complaints, so I'm definitely open to experimenting. Plus— what a great way to get my boys to eat new vegetables! Adding a little bit of a familiar flavor to a foreign one definitely eases the introduction.

This week, I decided to try kale. I've always heard the

redeeming qualities of this blueish-greenish rough leafy vegetable, but had never tried to cook it. The simplest instruction I could find included removing the hard center vein and then slicing, sauteing and serving with garlic and olive oil. That seemed easy enough, but I really wanted to see how I could prepare kale in the crock pot instead.

I've heard about soups containing kale, usually with a white bean and some sort of sausage or just a vegetable medley that included kale instead of something like cabbage. But in this beautiful summer heat, I didn't really want to sit down to a hot bowl of broth.

So, I decided to prepare a soft, tasty side dish with my kale, using the Southern inspiration of including meat in my vegetables. I found out that the steam of the crock pot really breaks down the toughness of the kale without removing any of its natural sweetness. While I intended for this dish to be an accompaniment, I actually think it would be great served like a stir fry over rice or noodles without the need for any additional sauce. Enjoy!

1 large bunch of kale. hard center vein removed, leaves sliced into strips

6 strips of bacon, cooked and crumbled

1/4 c. water

1/2 medium onion, sliced thin

3-4 cloves of garlic, minced

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

1/2 t. red pepper flakes

Put all ingredients in crock pot and mix together. Cook on low

for 3-4 hours.

Crock Pot Beef Stroganoff

Ok fans, this is the recipe you chose for today! Beef stroganoff is a great one-pot meal. You've got meat, dairy and carb (when served on noodles or rice) and if you count mushrooms as a veggie, then don't bother serving this with side dish. There is something great about the creaminess of this recipe that really makes the flavors melt together.

While skillet beef stroganoff really focuses on browning everything in a pan, the crock pot version really fuses the flavors together in a better way. The skillet version tastes to me like butter and burning, so I like that in the crock pot everything turns out soft and sweet.

While you might like trying everything light or fat-free, I'd rather see recipes that use moderation, but keep to the true versions. If you want to save calories, eat less stroganoff and serve it with a salad or steamed vegetable. And drink it with a Diet Coke, of course. Enjoy!

1 lb. beef tenderloin, cut into thin strips

1 medium sweet onion, sliced thin

8 oz. baby portobello mushrooms, cleaned and sliced

1 c. beef bouillon

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 t. black pepper

1/8 t. ground nutmeg

1 T. parsley flakes

1 T. flour

1 c. sour cream

1 lb cooked pasta (egg noodles, farfalle or fettuccine) or 4 c. cooked white rice

Place beef, onion, garlic, mushrooms in the crock pot. Pour in bouillon and then sprinkle with seasonings. Cook on low for 4 hours. In a separate bowl, mix together flour and sour cream and add to crock pot, then cook for another 1 hour on low. Serve on a bed of hot noodles or rice.

VARIATIONS: If you don't have beef tenderloin, try one pound of browned ground beef or chicken. If you don't like mushrooms, then use green beans, corn or just go without.

Crock Pot Barbequed Salami

My nana didn't make cookies. She didn't make tea sandwiches. She didn't make cute food like fruit, desserts, hors d'oeuvres, cordials or ganache. But she made amazing, hearty dishes in mass quantity like spaghetti and brisket and homemade potato salad. But anyone in my family could tell you that the one dish that she was known for was her barbequed salami. It is spicy and soft and just the right amount of sauce to smother a plain hamburger bun and make it melt.

Nana always bought the big tubes of kosher salami and hand sliced in and then quartered it. I don't know how she made it

so thin. I suggest using the tubes of Hebrew National salami, but here's an easier way to prepare it— cut it in half longways and then in half longways again (it will almost look like four hot dogs at this point). Then, run it through your food processor to slice it really thin. Or, you can do it by hand, like Nana, if you have a sharp knife and a lot of patience.

Kudos to Nana for always serving this amazing feast to our family, for getting us all together and giving us memories to last forever. This will always be a favorite meal for me and I can't wait to share it with all of you, too. Make it for your next picnic, family gathering or game night. Barbequed salami is best served with a pickle, some wavy potato chips to scoop up anything that falls off the bun and a huge stack of napkins. Enjoy!

2 lbs salami, sliced and quartered

2 12 oz. bottles Heinz chili sauce

1 c. ketchup

1 onion, quartered and sliced

1 green pepper, minced

2 stalks celery, minced

2 T. white vinegar

1/4 c. brown sugar

1 t. dry mustard

1 t. chili powder

1 t. Worcestershire sauce

1/2 t. Tabasco sauce

Prepare meat to be sliced and quartered. Place in crock pot. Cook onion, green pepper and celery in a pan until soft, but not browned. Add to meat. Mix remaining ingredients in a separate bowl and then pour into crock pot. Mix all ingredients together. Heat on low for 2-3 hours. Serve on soft, plain hamburger buns.

Crock Pot Chicken Divan



This recipe gives me crazy flashbacks! My mom use to make this when I was a kid. She made it in the oven, but it was almost the same recipe—broccoli, chicken, rice and some sauce that had a little bit of an orange color but didn't taste

at all like oranges. It took me a few more years of life to find out that the color was from the curry powder. I think Crayola should add the crayon color "curry".

It's hard sometimes for my taste buds to explain the flavors to my head, but I think I've figured out most of my mom's recipe. I've added the crock pot. Maybe the celery seed, too, but I think it adds a nice flavor. I start with frozen chicken breasts because I never think ahead to thaw it out and I don't like when I defrost it in the microwave and then the edges get a little cooked and weird. Using frozen chicken breasts works just fine, it will defrost and cook and fall apart into the creamy goodness of the sauce and the starch of the rice and absorb all of the spices by the time it's done.

This home cooking will serve a table full of happy tummies and happy hearts. Enjoy!

1 lb. frozen broccoli cuts

1 c. uncooked white rice

3-4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

1 can cream of chicken soup

1 t. Worcestershire sauce

1 t. fresh lemon juice

2 t. curry powder

1/2 t. celery seed

1/2 t. ground black pepper

2 T. melted butter

1 c. shredded cheddar cheese

1/2 c. Parmesan cheese sprinkles

1/2 c. milk

1/2 c. mayonnaise

Put frozen broccoli in crock pot first. Sprinkle with rice. Lay chicken breasts on top. Mix remaining ingredients in a separate bowl and then pour on top of chicken. Cook on high for 4 hours. Prior to serving, shred chicken and mix everything together.

Crock Pot Beet Salad



In the midst of summer heat, I love to use my crock pot to cook the season's ripe vegetables. My kitchen stays cool and my taste buds get to dance. This week, I had friends bring me fresh beets from their community CSA. I love roasting beets in a little bit

of olive oil, salt and pepper, so I thought this would be a fun challenge for the crock pot.

When you roast beets in the oven, there is the chance of overcooking, resulting in a dried, wrinkled sad result for this moist and vibrant treat. With the locked-in moisture of the crock pot, I really think that beets get the chance to both marinate and cook to perfection.

Please note— this recipe calls for FRESH produce. This recipe is not intended for canned beets. When you are preparing fresh beets, be cautious that the juice doesn't dye your hands, your counter or your cutting board. But you will benefit greatly by doing the preparation, because the taste and texture of using fresh produce for this recipe is so much better than you could ever replicate with a canned product.

6 large fresh beets, greens removed and skins peeled, sliced

3-4 fresh white radishes, greens removed and skins peeled, then sliced

1/4 c. water

3 T. olive oil

1/2 t. salt

1 t. ground black pepper

1 t. celery seed

1/2 t. ground mustard

1/4 onion, sliced thin

2 T. red wine vinegar

topping: 1/2 c. crumbled feta cheese

Put all ingredients in crock pot and stir together. Cook on low for 4 hours. After beet salad cools, transfer and refrigerate until salad is cold. When serving, top it with 1/2 c. crumbled feta cheese.

Crock Pot Cincinnati Chili

If you are unfamiliar with Cincinnati chili, let me explain to you how this is different from what you might think. This is more like a spaghetti sauce, than a stew. It usually has some combination of allspice, cinnamon and sometimes cocoa powder in it. There are no beans cooked in this pot and it is not meant to be consumed by itself. It is however, an amazing topper for hot dogs, spaghetti, french fries or even in a tortilla! When you eat this, there are different ways of presenting it– five in fact! Two-way would be spaghetti and chili, three-way adds finely shredded cheddar cheese, four-way diced onions and five-way would be all of the above plus some dark red kidney beans. Crazy enough– you can also top it with oyster crackers and hot sauce, if you so choose.

Skyline and Gold Star are probably the most common brands of

Cincinnati Chili and you can get it at the fast-food restaurants or in cans at the grocery store. But since I don't live in the Great Lakes area anymore, I make my own crock pot Cincinnati chili using my best friend's mom's recipe. Yes, it's three degrees of separation, but it's still so good! So to "K" and "R"—thank you for sharing your recipe with me, it's better than the original!!

1.5 lbs. ground beef

1 29 oz. can tomato sauce

1 14.5 oz can peeled whole tomatoes

1 onion, diced

1/2 t. allspice

1/2 t. cinnamon

1 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

1 1/2 t. chili powder

1 t. white vinegar

1 clove garlic, minced

3 bay leaves

Brown meat in a pan, then add to crock pot. Add all ingredients and stir well. Cook on high 4-5 hours. Smash peeled tomatoes while still in the crock pot. Remove bay leaves before serving. See notes above for different ways of enjoying your Cincinnati chili, including on a hot dog, on french fries, in a tortilla, or most commonly on spaghetti and topped with finely shredded cheddar cheese.

Crock Pot Nacho Fries

I remember as a kid going to diners and cute little restaurants with good homecooking and a little grease on everything. It was always a treat to get something smothered or covered or dipped or drizzled. I don't usually eat a lot of fried and greasy, especially not in the crock pot, but today it just sounded good. I'm serving my crock pot dish with a side salad and low-cal dressing. Maybe if I wash it down with a Diet Coke it will just cancel out the bad stuff.

One of my favorite appetizers from my youth was "not-so-fries"— it was cheese and bacon and sour cream on top of silver dollar shaped french fries. The fried coins were coated in toppings and best when shared with friends! I also really like bar food like nachos— again with the cheese covered goodness! My other favorite food isn't as unhealthy, but I really like pita and tzatziki sauce. There is something about the cold, creamy cucumber that becomes highly addictive. As you can probably conclude, I am completely food-oriented, so most of my memories include visual and culinary associations.

So, it is now my intention to combine three of my favorite snack foods in one amazing crock pot side dish. Enjoy!

1 lb. bag frozen french fries

1 c. shredded cheddar cheese

1/2 c. frozen corn kernels

2 oz. jarred jalapeno slices

4 oz. salsa

toppings:

sour cream

1/2 English cucumber, peeled, sliced and quartered

Coat crock pot with non-stick spray. Spread frozen french fries in bottom of pot, layer with ingredients. Cook on high for 2 hours. Serve with a dollop of sour cream and some cucumber. Feel free to use a fork or your fingers to consume!