

Crock pot broth

Last night I cooked an entire crock pot of food with no intention of eating it anytime this week. This is the beauty of the crock pot! I know that next week I want to make a big batch of chicken soup. But, I don't want it to be a day long project, I need it to be an easy meal.

So last night, I crock potted four boneless, skinless chicken breasts, 1 c. baby carrots, half an onion, 1 T. parsley and a little salt and pepper. I set it on high for 4 hours. When it was done, all the broth went into plastic containers for the freezer and the chicken and carrots are in the refrigerator for lunches today. Voila— when I want to make my soup, I simply put the brick of frozen chicken broth into a pot and let it simmer back to soup. Then I can add noodles or rice or more vegetables and have my meal done in a matter of minutes.

Homemade chicken broth is a healthier alternative to using boxed broths or bouillion. Store-bought bases are much higher in sodium and usually have that weird yellow tinge. This easy recipe means that my soup will taste flavorful and look authentic.

You can do this recipe with beef as well, but when the broth cools, I would suggest skimming the fat off of the top. BL/SK chicken breasts are very lean and don't leave much to skim off, but since most cuts of beef have a higher fat content, you would want to remove some the excess. You can also make vegetable broth (try using carrots, celery, leeks, onions and parsley) or fish broth (from any part of the fish) in your crock pot.

After you make your broth, your chicken, beef, fish or veggies are cooked very soft, but most of the flavor has been boiled out. But, the meat is a great texture to add sauces too, try

forking the meat apart and adding BBQ sauce for pulled sandwiches or chopping up chicken for curried chicken salad (see roasted chicken post for recipe). The vegetables can be glazed or broiled and served as a side dish with any future meal.

Hopefully, this post has you thinking ahead to future meals and you'll let your crock pot do your base preparations. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Corned beef and cabbage

(yes, this is a day early, but it's to motivate you to go out tonight and buy your supplies so you can make this amazing meal tomorrow)

Happy St. Patrick's Day! Many of us will pretend to have some Irish heritage this week and join in celebrations across the country. Whether you attend a parade or just go to work with a "Kiss me, I'm Irish!" button, you can have a festive tradition meal ready by the time you come home.

I did a little research online and found out that "corned beef and cabbage is the traditional meal enjoyed by many on St. Patrick's Day, but only half of it is truly Irish. Cabbage has long been a staple of the Irish diet, but it was traditionally served with Irish bacon, not corned beef. The corned beef was substituted for bacon by Irish immigrants to the Americas around the turn of the century who could not afford the real thing. They learned about the cheaper alternative from their Jewish neighbors." (from www.religionfacts.com)

However it became traditional, this is one of my favorite spring meals. Also, if you have leftover corned beef, try making corned beef hash and poached eggs this weekend for a second great meal from this easy crock pot recipe.

1 2-3 lb. corned beef

1/2 head cabbage, wedged

1 onion, wedged

4 red potatoes, quartered

1 c. baby carrots

2 bay leaves

1/2 t. celery seed

salt and pepper

Place potatoes, carrots and onion in bottom of crock pot. If you have a trivet, you can use that to make it easier to lift the corned beef out when it is done cooking. Sprinkle seasonings on meat. Lay corned beef on veggies. Add about 1/2 c. water. Cook on high for 4-6 hours. Add cabbage on top of meat and cook for another hour.

Enjoy your festivities (responsibly please)! ☐

Crock Pot Beef Stew

Last night I used my foodie knowledge to help a friend through a stressful moment. I described my love affair with Trader Joe's grocery store in such detail that she learned about my

secret ongoing shopping list, what each item is that I crave and how I use one dish, three ways. By the end of my "foodologue" I think I had actually BORED her out of her anxiety attack.

It made me start thinking about comfort foods. For many people, it's what our mommies used to make for us or maybe what we had at favorite holidays. I wonder what my boys will recall as their favorite foods, twenty years from now. Today's recipe might top the list. The last time I made my beef stew, my boys and my husband all were members of the clean plate club. Definitely a recipe to repeat often! It's also easy to throw half of the finished product into tupperware and freeze it for another dinner, another time.

1 to 1 and 1/2 lbs beef stew meat, cubed
8 oz. baby carrots
5 stalks celery, cleaned and cut
6-7 red potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters
1 medium onion, cut into chunks
8 oz. frozen green beans
2 cloves garlic, chopped fine
2 bay leaves
1/2 t. rosemary
1 cup beef bouillion
3/4 cup leftover red wine
1 can condensed tomato soup (don't add any water)
salt and pepper
(1 T. corn starch and 1/2 c. water to finish it off)

Dump everything into the crockpot. Set on low and cook for 8-9 hours until meat and vegetables are soft. Remove the meat and veggies and then mix in 1 T. corn starch that has been dissolved into 1/2 cup water. When the gravy thickens up, dump the meat and veggies back into the crockpot, mix it all together and serve.