

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 tip 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 Winter Vegetable Soup



Crock Pot Winter Vegetable Soup is the comfort of home served in a cup.

You'll often hear me say that food isn't just about sustenance, but also satisfaction. Entertainment. Emotion. Nutritionists focus on the content of food. Dietician focus on the balance of food. But when I sit down to eat– or more importantly– serve a meal to family and friends, it's about the experience and the memories we create around the table. Your food will be through your system in less than 24 hours, but the feeling you had when eating it will last a lifetime.

That's how I feel about this soup. It's based on a recipe my mom used to make when I was a kid. We ate dinner as a family, almost every night. It's just what we did. And we didn't do it in front of a television or on the run, but it was quick and

easy meals and meant to create an atmosphere for conversation.

Mom's meals were much like this one— a basic recipe with few ingredients that when combined received minimal complaints! We called it winter vegetable soup because nothing really is fresh during an Ohio winter. She could keep all of these items on hand and whip this meal up in about half an hour. I prefer to cook it low and slow, of course, and add a few more seasonings. But overall, it's the comfort of home in a cup.

Crock Pot Winter Vegetable Soup

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 5 hours

Serves: 8

2 12 oz. packages frozen vegetables- broccoli, cauliflower and carrot combination

1 32 oz. box of vegetable broth

3 T. butter

1 t. minced garlic

1/2 cup [crock pot caramelized onions](#) (or substitute 1/2 sweet onion, diced)

1/2 t. each: dill weed, celery seed, basil, parsley, salt, black pepper (ALL DRIED SEASONINGS)

1/4 c. corn starch

3 cups cold milk (2% or whole is preferred)

Pour frozen vegetables into crock pot, followed by broth, butter, garlic, onions and seasonings. DO NOT ADD CORN STARCH OR MILK YET. Cook on high for four hours. In a separate bowl, dissolve corn starch into COLD milk and then add to crock pot.

Cook on high for another hour. Soup will have thickened. Add salt and pepper to taste preference.

Summer Series, Day Five: Crock Pot White Ratatouille

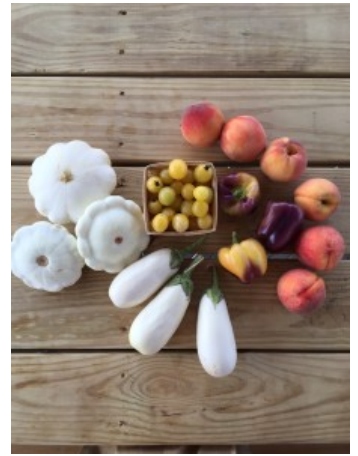


I'm seriously considering moving to the beach. Sunshine, seafood, salty air... it's all good for my soul. As long as I have a good internet connection, I might just be willing to carry my crock pots up and down the east coast and showcase local flavor and attractions. **Ok, I'm putting it out there— where should I go next and who can hook a**

girl and her crock pots up?! I'll feed you!

I used the rest of my finds from this week's farmer's market to make ratatouille for dinner tonight. I love the fact that I used the same kinds of ingredients, but in a new way to make a totally different presentation!

I have never seen pure white patapan squash or white eggplant before in this region, but I was delighted to experiment with these adaptations to the standard variety. I also used yellow cherry tomatoes instead of canned diced red ones. Such a delightful dish to cook low and slow while we played all day.



While we normally do adventures as a family, today we decided to go in two directions– literally. My husband took our oldest to the beach to tiptoe in the shark-infested waters and fly a kite in the salty breeze. I took our youngest on a bike ride down the main road of the island. I'm so glad I bought [a bike rack for my car](#) so we could all bring our bikes to the beach. It's so much easier than trying to rent them upon arrival! The sidewalks in Avon are flat and easy and the breeze felt fantastic even though it was a scorching day. We all enjoyed the sunshine and a bit of solitude. There is something about experiencing the wind on your face and the sun on your back, just taking a deep breath and exhaling gratitude. I'm not kidding when I tell you that staying [here](#) in the Outer Banks has really been cathartic for all of us.

But back to the food, of course! By the time we hit the beach, the bikes, came back to swim in the pool [at the house](#), and got cleaned up... dinner was ready and no work was needed. Another amazing day is complete and it's time to chill on the porch with a few cold drinks and listen to the birds and cicadas chirping in harmony.

Crock Pot Ratatouille

Serves 4-6

3-4 large white patapan squash, softball sized (about 1-1.5 lbs)

3 small white eggplant, 5-6 inches in length (about 1 lb or less)

1 sweet onion, diced

1 yellow pepper, diced

1 pint yellow cherry tomatoes

2 cloves garlic, minced

4 leaves fresh basil, chopped

1 c. broth (chicken or vegetable)

Mix all ingredients in crock pot and cook on low for 6-8 hours. Serve with rice, noodles or fresh bread and butter. If you can't find patapan squash, you can substitute yellow squash.

Crock Pot Thai Chicken soup

One of my favorite new indulgences is Thai food. I started a few years ago with Pad Thai. It's like the thai version of lomein, which is really just a step above the college-grade ramen noodle. But it started to introduce me to new flavors. Then, I moved up and through a few of the curry dishes; I quickly learned my ridiculously low capabilities for spicy food. I like my thai dishes with either chicken, tofu or shrimp— I just think think that these proteins absorb the most flavor from everything else it's cooked in.

There are some particular seasonings for Thai food, though, and I just don't keep these things in my kitchen yet. So

while I'd love to have lemongrass and keffir lime leaves abundantly available or even know where to buy some galangal, I'm replacing some of these flavors with some easier go-to foods that you can find at your regular grocery store.

My crock pot Thai chicken soup is an interpretation of a traditional Thai tom kha soup. It still has the coconut milk, chicken and mushrooms, but I use ginger instead of galangal and lime juice for the citrus twist. I also haven't broken down and bought fish sauce yet, so I just leave it out. Fish sauce's first impression is that it just tastes salty, so the broth really already fulfills that requirement for me.

I hope you enjoy the new flavors of this soup. If you want to make it more of a Thai dinner, try adding some white rice and veggies with curry sauce to make this a complete cultural meal!

3 boneless, skinless raw chicken breasts cut into strips

2 c. chicken broth

1 13.5 oz. can lite coconut milk

1 T. ginger root, peeled and minced

2 T. lime juice

6-8 mushrooms, cleaned and sliced

2 stalks celery, sliced

1 c. baby carrots

1 t. red chili pepper flakes

cilantro or basil leaves, sliced for garnish

Combine all ingredients in crock pot and cook on high for 4 hours. Serve with some green leaves sprinkled on top.

Crock Pot Vegetarian Lasagna

I love lasagna! Anytime you can combine everything into one dish and it hits pretty much every food group, then I'm a happy girl. But oven-baked lasagna takes way too much work... all the boiling and layering and smoothing and baking and spilling, then oven cleaning... I would rather just order lasagna from a nice little Italian restaurant than go through this whole charade.



This one-pot dinner is a great meat-free option that leaves you full and satisfied.

So after doing a little research, I've figured out that crock pot lasagna is very doable. Not only can you assemble it in the pot, but I am convinced that most of the cooking should take place in the pot, too. This dish is easy to cook, doesn't take more than an afternoon to finish and you can even freeze the leftovers for another night. That is, if there are any

leftovers!

I hope you enjoy this take on one of my favorites. Enjoy!

1 12 oz. box of lasagna noodles, uncooked

1 15 oz. container ricotta cheese

2 c. shredded mozzarella cheese

1 24 oz. container chunky spaghetti sauce

2 zucchinis, sliced thick

2 c. fresh spinach leaves

1/2 c. fresh basil leaves

1 egg

2-3 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 t. black pepper

1 t. dried oregano

3/4 c. water

1/2 c. parmesan cheese

This recipe is best made in an oval-shaped crock pot; a round one will work, it just creates a very tall lasagna.

In a separate bowl, combine ricotta cheese, egg, garlic and seasonings. Pour 1 c. of spaghetti sauce into the pot and stir it around so it coats the bottom of the crock pot. Fill the sauce jar up with 1 c. water and shake it around— this watered down sauce helps the noodles soften more when cooking. Place first layer of 3-4 noodles in crock pot. Cover noodles with 1/2 of ricotta mixture. Lay zucchini slices on next, followed by another layer of 3-4 lasagna noodles. Add 1 c. spaghetti sauce and cover noodles with 1 c. shredded

mozzarella cheese, spinach leaves, basil leaves and then the remaining ricotta mixture. Add final layer of noodles. Cover with remaining sauce and then sprinkle with mozzarella cheese and parmesan cheese. Cook on low for 3 hours.

Crock Pot Summer Onion Dip



If you read my post about the cute \$7 crockpot that I saw on sale last week, this recipe would be the perfect fit for it! If you have a “little dipper” sized crock pot, you can make this dip and then use the crock pot to serve it and keep it warm. I thought these flavors fused together well for an easy

afternoon snack.

I'd recommend serving my summer onion dip with crisp pita chips, wavy potato chips, baby carrots and cut up celery. It also would be great on a baked potato! It's a basic enough recipe that it would be great on top of pretty much anything. Enjoy!

1/2 c. chopped basil leaves

juice of 1 lemon

8 oz. cream cheese, warmed

1/2 t. black pepper

1 T. Worcestershire sauce

3 T. minced onion

1 clove garlic, minced

Put all ingredients in small crock pot and stir together. Heat on low for two hours.

Crock Pot Summer Vegetable Puree



As much as winter is the time for soups and stews, I really like summer soups too. This one isn't too hearty since it's a puree and I think it tastes really light when it is served warm, not hot. I've had to become really creative with vegetables this summer— with so much amazing local produce, I

tend to over buy!

I like to base this recipe on carrots, because the orange color of the puree is so inviting, but feel free to experiment with whatever is in your basket. Just remember to include a starch (potato, sweet potato, kohlrabi, etc.) to help thicken the dish and something sweet (apple, beet, melon, peach) to make this unique for summer. Herbs are totally up to your discretion, too. I like fresh basil, but if you have rosemary or thyme or some oregano, those would be great as well.

Whatever you do, you are making a crock pot of wonderful by

using fresh vegetables and your imagination. This should be served in a bowl, but it's perfect when it's thicker than soup, but thinner than mashed potatoes. PS— it's also a GREAT puree for baby food, but you can make it for your whole family to eat. Enjoy!

4 c. fresh carrots

2 stalks celery, chopped

2 yellow squash, cut into chunks

1 medium sweet onion, chopped

2 medium potatoes, cut into chunks

1 medium apple, cut off of core

2-3 cloves garlic, chopped

1 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

6-8 leaves fresh basil

2-3 c. vegetable broth

Put all vegetables and herbs into the crock pot, pour broth on top. Cook on high for 6 hours. Using immersion blender, puree in pot. (If you don't have one, then let dish cool and puree in batches in a standard blender.) Serve with a dollop of sour cream or greek yogurt on top and a sprinkle of fresh herbs.

Crock Pot Chicken Cacciatore



Happy birthday to my husband. He is an amazing man, father, lover and friend. And he loves my cooking. So for tonight, I wanted to make him a nice dinner. But of course, I still have the kids to take care of today, a house to clean before company and a dog that is begging to go out, so my options

for fine dining were a little limited. I decided to start a crock pot of food at lunchtime instead of at breakfast—our dinner will be done right as the kids are going to bed... so we can eat a meal as adults and maybe even partake in a glass of wine.

I had totally planned on doing chicken fajitas for dinner tonight or some sort of hearty “man” food, but my hubby went out with his coworkers for lunch at a Mexican restaurant, so I needed to reroute my dinner plans. Since I already had the chicken, I decided to make chicken cacciatore (pronounced catch-ahh-toe-ree) instead. It’s robust and filling, but an easy one pot meal.

Cacciatore is usually served over a thin pasta like angel hair, but it can also be served over rice, if you prefer. I like to top mine with grated Parmesan cheese instead of putting the cheese in when it’s cooking. You can also add other vegetables if you’d like—many cacciatore recipes add mushrooms and/or fresh basil leaves.

You don’t need a celebration to dine on this great chicken dish. Enjoy!

4 frozen boneless, skinless chicken breasts

1 small onion, sliced thin

1 green pepper, sliced thin

1/2 red pepper, sliced thin

1/2 yellow pepper, sliced thin

1 medium zucchini, sliced thin

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 28 oz. can petite diced tomatoes

1 c. spaghetti sauce

1 T. parsley flakes

1 t. basil flakes

1 t. oregano flakes

1/2 t. celery seed

1/2 t. black pepper

1/2 t. salt

Combine vegetables in crock pot, top with all seasonings and stir together. Pour in tomatoes and sauce and stir again. Place frozen chicken breasts on top of mixture. Cook on high for 4-6 hours. Serve over thin pasta or rice.

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.