

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 Chana Masala



So I recently riddled my fans on [Facebook](#) about whether they would want a crock pot chicken masala 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 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

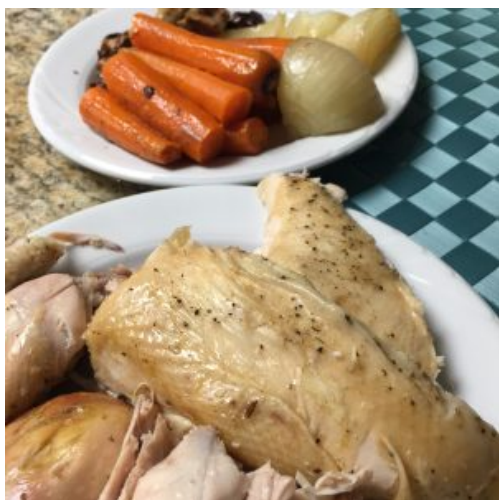
2 T. tomato paste

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 Whole Freaking Chicken



Just FOUR ingredients to make this delicious dinner!

Hello from South Carolina! This is my first post since relocating to Hilton Head Island and I'm so glad to have my crock pot unpacked and start getting settled in. I don't know about you, but after eating out for days on end, we start to miss our favorites dishes.

Nothing warms my heart more than hearing my kids ask me to

make specific meals. Our first meals when my kitchen “re-opened”? My youngest asked for pasta carbonara (because it’s a good belief in life that bacon makes everything better!). My oldest asked for [taco night](#); hard and soft tortillas are a requirement– it needs to be both or none at all.

But then I got to pick! I wanted something easy to make and easy to clean up. So of course I used [my crock pot](#)!



Use root vegetables to make an “edible trivet” in the crock pot.

This recipe seriously only has four ingredients. And after a day of low and slow cooking, you can serve a whole freaking chicken. If you’d like to play with the flavors, try using different root vegetables as the “edible trivet” or rubbing the bird with different seasonings. By perching the bird on top of the veggies, the meat won’t be soaking in liquid while it is cooking and the drippings with flavor the meat with all the delicious goodness.

Other recipes recommend rubbing the skin with oil or butter, like you would if you baked the chicken in the oven, but I disagree. The skin is not going to really crisp in the crock pot, so the added calories of the lube are really not necessary.

When you try this recipe at home, please post it to the [Dinner](#)

[Is A Crock Facebook page](#) and let us know how you tweaked the recipe to make it your own!

Crock Pot Whole Freaking Chicken

Time: 6-8 hours

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Serves: 6

3-4 lb whole chicken, skin on, giblets removed

6 whole carrots, peeled

1 sweet onion, quartered

1 T [Mrs. Dash salt-free seasoning mix](#)

Rinse the chicken inside and out with cold water and then pat dry with paper towels. Shake the Mrs. Dash seasonings on the outside of the chicken and also on the inside. Wash your hands. Arrange the carrots on the bottom of the crock pot like you are making an edible trivet. Then add the onions as additional perches. Place the bird on top of the vegetables and make sure the lid sits comfortably on top of the crock pot. If the lid doesn't sit flat, adjust the veggies under the bird until it fits better. Be cautious as you reconfigure the lid and the contents so that you are not contaminating the handles with raw chicken juices. Cook on low for 6-8 hours. Remove bird carefully and carve. The vegetables also make a delicious side dish!

Crock Pot Ground Turkey Stuffed Peppers



Make your holiday table a little brighter with these beautiful stuffed bell peppers!

My favorite season is sunshine. I don't really care what month of the year it actually is... if the sun is beaming and I can feel the warmth on my face then it's my favorite season, for sure. Fall brings lots of sunshine- and rain- and over programming of school functions, sports, travels, holidays, and chaos. That's why I desperately need that sunshine to keep me warm and happy! ☐

Since days like today have a full agenda and to do list, I'm taking advantage of leftovers in my fridge and making an easy low-fat crock pot meal that we can all sit down to as soon as we get home from today's events. It's tempting to drive through or order delivery when the day is so full already... but I'd rather have dinner ready in the crock pot and just get home, sit down, and eat. Sure, there are a few dishes to do

after the kids go to bed, but it's so much healthier and less crazy for me to plan ahead and just have it done and ready to go.



We ate stuffed peppers pretty often growing up. I like the simplicity of meat and veggies and it is a great way to use up leftover rice. I can also totally sneak in extra veggies because it's really like a pretty pepper stuffed with a huge meatball! You can either cut the bell peppers in half or just cut the crown off and stuff them

whole and standing up. I make that decision based on the shapes/sizes of the peppers and how they will fit best in my crock pot. If I use the whole pepper, I like to use this [insta pot](#) or one that is more vertical... but if I'm cutting them in half, then [this is definitely the one to use](#).

My kids like the filling, but not the peppers, so when I make this at home I save half of the filling and bake it in a loaf pan instead of stuffing it into peppers for the crock pot. I don't usually like to make two separate meals for dinner... but if I give them the stuffed peppers they just eat the middle out and leave the fleshy and bright veggie to throw out. That makes me sad! So I have compromised and bake it separate for them to eat.

Crock Pot Ground Turkey Stuffed Peppers

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 5-6 hours

Serves: 6

6 medium bell peppers (red, yellow, orange, or green)

1 lb. ground turkey

2 c. cooked white rice

1 c. diced sweet onion

1/2 c. shredded carrot

1/2 c. canned corn kernels, drained

2 T. tomato paste

8 oz. can of tomato sauce

2 T. brown sugar

Cut the tops off of the peppers and pull out seeds and pithy parts. In a separate bowl, mix the meat and veggies. Form into balls and fill the peppers; the meat can be pressed in firmly. In another bowl, mix the tomato paste and sauce with the brown sugar, then pour the mixture over the tops of the peppers. Cook on low for 4-6 hours.

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 Chocolate Bread Pudding



What could be better than a recipe starting with challah and Rolos?!

This dessert was a huge hit last night at the Dinner Is A Crock Launch Party, showcasing some of my favorite recipes that I like to use in my cooking classes. We had so much fun, ate way too much, and laughed all the calories away.

I've made this dish many times before in my oven. When my son was younger, he was allergic to eggs, so it was really hard to make safe desserts for him that we actually all wanted to eat. My friend, Lisa, shared this recipe with me that originated [here](#). I took the oven version and just threw it all in my crock pot instead. It stayed warm and gooey and perfectly warm all night. On the other hand, if I had made it in the oven and served it, it would have been cold and crunchy well before everyone had a chance to eat it. This is one definite benefit of the crock pot!

Let's be honest, the first two ingredients capture everyone's interest. Challah. Rolos. What else do you need to know?!



We served the crock pot chocolate bread pudding with both vanilla and chocolate ice cream, but chocolate definitely won last night— only a couple people wanted vanilla ice cream. Good to know for the future— I will buy more chocolate than vanilla. Although I'm tempted to get a coffee or salted caramel next time instead of

vanilla!

Crock Pot Chocolate Bread Pudding

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Cook Time: 3 hours

Serves 12-15

1 loaf challah, cubed (about 8 cups)

1 8 oz. bag [mini Rolos](#), each cut in half (this is easier because they are already unwrapped)

1.4 oz. package cook and serve chocolate pudding

2.5 cups lowfat milk

1 12 oz. jar [caramel topping](#)

Put challah and Rolos in the crock pot. In a separate bowl, mix milk and pudding until dissolved, then pour into crock pot and mix together until bread cubes are coating evenly. Cook on low for 2 hours. Chocolate pieces will be melted and gooey. Pour caramel topping over everything evenly and then keep on "warm setting" for an hour. Serve with ice cream.

Renovation, Week THREE and FOUR: Hurry Up to Wait



The cabinets arrived three weeks early, can you believe it?!

Welcome to the Renovation Dance. Please, find a partner and a tool. Take two steps forward and then slide to the left. Take another step forward and then jump back. The Renovation Dance is a new way of jiggling about in your kitchen— there's no sink, no appliances, not even a cabinet to be seen. Time for a party... just hurry up and wait for the music to begin.

I was super excited to report that our cabinets arrived last week— three weeks ahead of schedule! What?! That never happens with a renovation! *Jump up and down two times.* The boxes filled my family room from wall to wall to ceiling. My poor dogs had to travel a labyrinth in order to get outside (which was pretty entertaining to watch!).

Count three days and then the install team joined in the dance. By now, the cabinets are all unboxed and counted. Oooh... look at those pretty doors. *Take one step right as the electrician shows up.* Check out the old layout and realize that the current wiring set up will no longer pass code. *Grab your partner and take a full turn backwards.*

I bowed out and decided to focus on food instead- clearly a better project for me to manage. I was thankful for friends

that hosted us for dinners this past weekend. I loved the company and the delicious meals. My kids even complained that we haven't had friends over for dinners in the last few weeks. Ummm yeah?! We don't have a kitchen! But it's reassuring to know that they like entertaining just as much I do. (*Remind me to add my boys to my dance card.*)



Fresh foods make all the difference in keeping us eating healthy during the renovation.

Meals have been pretty basic recently. I used the side burner on the grill to boil up a pound of pasta one night. We had home-rolled sushi the next with edamame and pomegranate seeds. I'm so glad my kids like fresh produce. I've been trying to have something fresh at each meal... sometimes something like pomegranate seeds or sometimes as simple as baby carrots and ranch dip.

Hard boiled eggs, tuna salad, and lunchmeat have become great go-to snacks at all hours of the day.

I have a newfound appreciation for all of those frozen veggies that you cook in the bag. At first, I was skeptical about cooking IN a plastic bag, but it saves me so much effort if I

don't have to wash a separate container out in the basement sink.

I've worked through my first four week meal plan pretty well, so starting next week, I will write a new plan that will carry us through the beginning of January. I'm *very hopeful* that the kitchen will come together by then and I can get back to real cooking. I miss it, but this plan has saved me time and money, so I don't mind a little legwork.

Renovation, Week Two: THX and Floors



Here's an easy way to free up space in your oven when you are making Thanksgiving dinner.

While most of you are probably brining your turkeys, whipping your cream, or stuffing that bird, we're being a little non-traditional with our family time this holiday season. Yes— we will still eat a full Thanksgiving dinner, but no... the renovation is not complete. No kitchen? No problem!

The goal this holiday weekend is to install about 600 square feet of hardwood floors in the kitchen (and throughout the family room). Last week, in [Week One](#), we stripped everything down to the subfloors. We received great news about our cabinets being ready ahead of schedule, but we need to get the wood down first!

At this point, most people think I'm crazy for doing so much of the work ourselves, but it's been really therapeutic. Haven't you ever wanted to take a crow bar to some part of your own house?! The floors though— this was legit remodeling work. Lucky for me, my husband has a masters degree in pure awesomeness and together, with a little help from friends and family, we were able to get the job done.

But let's focus on what is important— what we are eating! Again— I have NO KITCHEN. I've got a workable sink in the basement, a stack of paper/plastic everything from Costco, and some prepped foods in the freezer.

Here's how Week Two panned out in our bellies. Thanksgiving dinner was the big challenge. I was all set to do [Crock Pot Turkey Legs](#)— it's a family favorite. But after checking three grocery stores for turkey legs with no success, I gave in and just bought cooked turkey meat. I did manage to make [Crock Pot Green Bean Casserole](#) and reheated some mashed potatoes. My boys wouldn't call it Thanksgiving dinner though if I didn't have the "secret" cranberry sauce. You know, the one that has the ridges on the sides from the shape of the can. I did find organic cranberry sauce this year that didn't have high fructose corn syrup in it, so that seemed like a win-win to me.



It's easy to keep all of these ingredients on hand for a delicious dinner anytime!

On Friday and Saturday, we worked on THX dinner leftovers. I also made [Crock Pot Chili](#)— it's the easiest recipe ever. You might have also seen my [Crock Pot Tortellini Soup](#) on social media, that was a huge hit. I used [this recipe](#), but also added a can of white beans to add more protein. It's so easy and there was no prep work and no clean up. The ingredients for both of these meals are easy to keep on hand in the pantry and freezer and I recommend adding them to your next shopping trip.

You might not be remodeling this holiday season, but I'm guessing you too will have crazy days, impromptu gatherings and festive celebrations. You don't need a demolition to save yourself time and energy in the kitchen. Save time, cook slower. Savor the flavors and the moments.

Renovation, Week One: Demolition

I cook. I am not a trained cook, but it's my favorite thing to do for my family, my friends and my fans. I just needed a better place to do it all.



This is the last picture I took of my old kitchen before we started tearing it apart.

But my kitchen— well, it was still circa 1985 with a laminate countertop, too little cabinet space and not enough storage. This is my office, my test kitchen, and it was time for an upgrade. It took six months to plan and will probably take six weeks to do, but I am so excited to share this whole process with you.

DISCLAIMER: I was hoping to get sponsorship on the renovation and tell you all about it and thank the companies blah blah blah, because it was better for ME to get that. But since we're doing a lot of the work ourselves, it made more sense to just be brutality honest with you about the process and give shout outs to those that did great... and let you know what choices I would make differently in retrospect.

I worked primarily with my local [Home Depot](#) to do the designs—the kitchen designer was fantastic. She met with me every week for almost three months. We played with different layouts, discussed my style and what I was picturing in my head and figuring out how to get it on paper. We carefully selected cabinets and worked out some interesting kinks in my space. She was patient and knowledgeable and even kept it on budget. Thank you, Kelly, for helping to bring my project to fruition.

My kitchen style is going to be French Country. It's going to be a careful balance between rustic and elegant. It will be very user-friendly, lots of workable surfaces, and even a desk. It will be sturdy and spacious and inviting. When it's all done, you'll get to see me working in my crock pots while looking out the back windows. You can belly-up to the counter bar and enjoy libations while I fix dinner. If you want to help out, there will be two prep stations on the kitchen island. And at the end of the day—cleanup should be a cinch. I'm giddy with excitement.



And 24 hours later...
the kitchen was gone.

But before this can all come together... it has to all come apart. We've spent the week tearing my old kitchen apart— as a

family. Yes, I gave my kids hammers and crow bars and a lesson is safety. Yes, I prepped meals ahead and cooked in my crockpot while wearing safety glasses. It was hard work—exhausting, in fact, but I love the fact that we did it. I encourage you to push yourselves to be involved as much as possible in projects of the home and of the heart, when possible.

And then I got the call... your cabinets are ready. WHAT?! But that's three weeks ahead of schedule! In what alternate universe does production and delivery go ahead of schedule.

My kitchen— and family room— are torn out down to the subfloors and my cabinets will be delivered in a week?

Happy Thanksgiving, y'all. It's time to get to work!