

# Crock Pot Arugula Lentil Salad



Spring is here! Time for salads and fun.

Spring is here! No really, I mean it. OK, so the northeast might still have snow and the south is already sweating, but hey– it's April– and no one can deny that. We had friends over on Saturday night and all I wanted was an easy dinner of finger foods, fun, and friends. Let's be honest– the first supplies I bought for dinner were the cold liquor and the marshmallows for smores. I started with an antipasto platter of olives, cheese, summer sausage, and stuffed grape leaves, because that pretty much took five minutes to make. But I wanted a light salad that would be filling and knew that I needed to sneak some protein in there.

So I decided to try lentils in the crock pot as a perfect spring salad topping. I've never made them before, so I did a little reading online. I learned that vegetarians love lentils (no surprise) but that I should never-ever-de-ever put salt in the water when I am cooking them (good to know!). I also read

that you don't want lentils to get mushy, so I committed to cooking them on high instead of low.



Lentils are easy to cook and can be used in so many ways!

Lentils turned out to be ridiculously easy in the crock pot. First off, follow the directions about sifting through the lentils for stones or dirt or whatever hippies don't actually like to eat in their plant-based superfoods. Then, use a ratio of about one cup lentils to three cups water. You will have lots of excess water in the crockpot when the lentils are done, but you can easily use a slotted spoon to scoop the lentils out when they are done swimming.

I watched the crock pot a little more closely than I normally do because I really didn't want the lentils to be overdone. I had set it for 4 hours on high, but at about 3 hours, they were done. Next time, I'll know to set it for 3 hours and I can go about my business. This is what having a relationship with your crock pot is all about, but sometimes the trust has to be earned.

That's it— perfect protein-packed superfood ready to top my spring salad.

So I started with arugula. Added the strained lentils. Topped it with a little bit of sweet pepper relish (you could use regular fresh red peppers if you prefer. For the dressing, I

mixed together some fig balsamic vinegar with some herb-infused olive oil. If you have an olive oil store near you, it is totally worth getting these fun flavors and using them to make really easy dressings. Enjoy spring, people! Enjoy a fresh salad, a refreshing adult beverage, and some toasted marshmallows for dessert.

### **Crock Pot Arugula Lentil Salad**

**serves 6-8 as sides**

2 c. dried lentils

4 cloves garlic, peeled

6 c. water

5 oz. baby arugula, rinsed and chilled

3 T. sweet

pepper relish or 1/2 red pepper, diced

dressing to taste

Put lentils, garlic and water in the crock pot for 3 hrs on high. Use a slotted spoon to remove all lentils. Top arugula with lentils, red pepper, and toss with dressing. Enjoy!

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## **Crock Pot Pork Chops in Spaghetti Sauce**

This is such an easy recipe, I'm almost ashamed to post it. But it made the best spaghetti sauce I've EVER tasted.

Honestly, I considered licking the pot. I always try to “amp up” store-bought spaghetti sauce and this is now my favorite way to do it. This might just revolutionize pasta night at your house too.

I used bone-in pork chops because I think they have great texture and just the right amount of fat. By searing them first, you keep the moistness in the meat, but by prolonging the cooking process and finishing them in the crock pot, the meat becomes so tender, it will literally fall off the bone and you can cut it with a fork.

The leftover sauce in the crock pot can be used on the meat, the pasta, on garlic bread... or cook a little extra and then freeze the pork-infused sauce for another dinner. Seriously... sometimes I even impress myself. This sauce is now a new family favorite after just one meal. Enjoy!

1.5-2 lbs bone-in pork chops

2 T. olive oil

3 cups spaghetti sauce (traditional style)

1 lb box thin spaghetti

Heat oil in flat skillet. Cook pork chops for 4-5 minutes on each side or until brown sear forms. Pour half of the spaghetti sauce into crock pot, put pork chops onto sauce and then cover them with remaining sauce. Cook on high for four hours or until meat is soft enough that it pulls away easily from the bone. Cook pasta according to package directions. Serve meat with pasta and cover both with sauce.

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# Crock Pot Turkey Pot Roast

This afternoon, I went with my family to an apple orchard to pick fresh, local produce to enjoy. It felt organic. Not in the “lacking chemicals and pesticides” way, but in the “feeling connected to the earth and supporting something good”. My kids loved picking the fruit and sampling all the different kinds of apples. I am eager to make my [escaloped apples](#) recipe as soon as possible.

But the best part of the day was coming home to dinner already made and a very hungry family to feed!

One of my favorite meals to cook and eat is pot roast– meat, potatoes, carrots, celery, onions... all the basics. It’s so filling and full of great nutrients. One crock pot is a whole meal. But sometimes I like to vary it up a little. I made a very similar recipe today, but instead of beef, I used three turkey legs as our protein.



The meat becomes so tender it falls off the bone. I used whole carrots because they make such a nice presentation and they don’t get soggy when they cook. The key to keeping the meat tender is to use the meat rack for the crock pot and keep it elevated. It still absorbs all the flavors

as it cooks, but it doesn’t deteriorate as it cooks.

I highly recommend making this dish for a family dinner or even for the holidays! Trust me– I’m sure you can think of 100 other ways to spend a weekend afternoon than staying in the kitchen cooking. Get out there and enjoy life a little, then come home for a great meal. Enjoy!

3-4 turkey legs (2-3 lbs)

6 whole carrots, peeled

1/2 sweet onion, cut into chunks

4 stalks celery, cut into 2-3 inch sections

1 t. minced garlic

1 white potato, cut into chunks

2 c. chicken broth

1 T. olive oil

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

2 t. Mrs. Dash seasoning

Put all produce (carrots, onions, celery, potato) in crock pot and arrange in bottom. Using an oval shaped crock pot is best. Put crock pot meat rack in so that the meat will sit just above the produce. Pour chicken broth in, but do not let the volume of it reach the meat rack. Place turkey legs on meat rack. Brush meat with olive oil and then sprinkle with seasonings. Cook on low for 6 hours.

*(If you like gravy, put the remaining liquid in a pot on the stove and bring it to a boil. Add 1 T. corn starch that has been dissolved into 1/4 c. warm water. When gravy thickens, serve with turkey pot roast.)*

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# 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.

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## Vinaigrette Salad

***“To make a good salad is to be a brilliant diplomatist –  
the problem is entirely the same in both cases.***

***To know exactly how much oil one must put with one’s vinegar.”***

**Oscar Wilde 1856-1900, British Author**

Dinner was not a crock last night. We grilled out brats and had cold side dishes, drank chilled wine and enjoyed time with friends. Sometimes I really enjoy the contrast of a hot main





dish and the refreshment of cold accompaniments. I made a vinaigrette salad last night that everyone seemed to really enjoy, so I thought I'd share the recipe with you too. Tomorrow I'll use the crock pot, but this was a nice change.

Making a vinaigrette salad takes only a few ingredients, but just the right balance (as Oscar Wilde said in the quote listed above). You want chemistry and harmony and simplicity in the perfect mix. Depending on the potency of your ingredients, you may want to divide the dressing measurements in half and add a bit at a time until you get a good balance. Remember that when the vegetables marinate, they will absorb some oil and vinegar and release some water, so you might want to drain the salad a little bit before serving. Enjoy!

1 English cucumber, peeled and cut into chunks

2 c. cherry or grape tomatoes, cut in half

1/2 medium sweet onion, cut into chunks

1 15 oz. can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed

1 15 oz. can green beans, drained and rinsed

3 T. fresh parsley, chopped

1/4 c. extra light olive oil

3 T. red wine vinegar

1/2 t. salt

1 t. coarsely ground pepper

Mix all vegetable together, then drizzle with oil, vinegar and seasonings. Toss salad together and then add parsley and mix one more time. Refrigerate at least an hour and then drain, if needed, before serving.

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## Crock Pot Enchiladas

Happy Cinco de Mayo! This is a really easy recipe for enchiladas– you buy the sauce already made and a handful of other ingredients. When you put it all together it tastes authentic and just the right balance of flavors and spice. I always keep a bag of flour tortillas in the refrigerator, so even though enchiladas are traditionally made with corn tortillas, I'm going to use the ones I already have.

Enchiladas are pretty much a corn (maize) tortilla wrapped around any variety of fillings, including meats, potato, seafood, vegetables, cheese, beans or any combination of these, covered in a red chili sauce. The Spanish word “enchilado” means spicy or hot, but that doesn't mean that your taste needs to be extreme. You can add intensity with jalapenos or Tabasco if you'd like to crank it up a bit. This dish is also a great way to get your family to fill up on protein and you can use shredded beef or chicken if you prefer it over ground meat.

I suggest serving this dish with some Spanish rice or refried beans and some shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes and a dollop of sour cream. And if you serve dinner and request “dos cervezas, por favor”, I say cheers to you and enjoy your celebration!

1 lb ground turkey

1 medium onion, sliced thin

1 can diced green chiles

1/2 c. salsa

3 T. olive oil

10 tortillas (corn is traditional, flour ones still work)

1 can enchilada sauce

1 c. shredded colby jack cheese

2 T. jalapenos (from the jar)

Heat olive oil in a separate pan and brown meat until crumbled and cooked throughout. Add onion and saute until translucent. Add green chiles and salsa to mixture and stir, turn off heat. Pour a little enchilada sauce into the crock pot, just enough to coat the bottom. Roll 2-3 T of meat mixture in each tortilla and then place each one in separately, seam-side down (this works easiest in an oval shaped crock pot). Cover tortillas with remaining enchilada sauce, then the cheese and then sprinkle with the jalapenos. Cook on low for 3-4 hours. Ole!!

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## Crock Pot Salmon- Crock for the Cure



This morning I am participating in the **Susan G. Komen's Race for the Cure**. It has been my privilege to support this cause and all the amazing women and men that are fighting cancer every day. We all know someone, have loved someone or have experienced this battle ourselves. We must provide courage and compassion to support each other and on a day like today we add enthusiasm and charisma as well. I am proud of my community for running (no pun intended) such an amazing event every year.

One of the goals of the I AM THE CURE campaign this year is to "start the fight by living right!" It only makes sense that I challenge myself today to make a healthy PINK meal. I think we'll call it Crock for the Cure. Maybe someday I'll run my own fundraiser along these lines, but for today, I'd like to provide you with an easy colorful recipe. Enjoy!

***(to find a Race for the Cure in your area, visit <http://ww5.komen.org/findarace.aspx>)***

4 salmon steaks (about 1-2 lbs of salmon; deboned, skin on)

1 red bell pepper, seeded and sliced thin

1 T. pink peppercorns

1 c. white wine

1 T. olive oil

2 T. fresh dill, chopped

1/2 t. salt

Start by coating crock pot with a non-stick spray. Place salmon steaks side by side in the crock pot. Drizzle with olive oil, peppercorns, salt and fresh dill. Scatter sliced red pepper on top. Pour wine around edges of fish, but don't

rinse off the seasonings. Poach for 2 hours on high.

To continue the theme, mix 1 T. softened cream cheese into 1/2 c. cocktail sauce and serve with the fish. It will be pink and spicy and will complement the opaque color of the fish.

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## Crock Pot London Broil

My head had been swirling with a mix of the traditional children's song about a certain London Bridge and the contemporary naughty version of the song by a certain Mrs. Black-Eyed Pea. While I might not have the cute sequin British flag on a pair of boy shorts, I think my London Broil is a fine salute. The funny thing about the name "London Broil" is that there actually isn't any connection to London or English foods and you don't actually have to broil this cut of meat, even though that direction is clearly stated in the name.

This beef steak is a good balance of muscle and fat and is moist and juicy. It can also be labeled as top round steak or flank steak and it's still the same part of the cow. It is helpful to marinate this cut of meat overnight before cooking in the oven, but you can get that same effect by cooking it on low with the marinade on the meat in the crock pot. If the meat doesn't fall apart when it's done cooking, you can remove it from the crock pot and make thin slices across the grain of the meat. Leftover slices also make really good cold roast beef sandwiches.

A simple meat and potatoes dish is a great way to have a filling dinner without having a lot of fuss. So be American and crock pot your London Broil today!

2-3 lb. London Broil (also called flank steak or top round steak)

4 potatoes, cut into chunks

6 carrots, peeled and cut

1 medium onion, quartered

1/4 c. Worcestershire sauce

2 T. red wine vinegar

2 T. olive oil

3 T. ketchup

2 cloves of garlic, chopped

1 t. black pepper

1 t. rosemary

Place veggies in crock pot first, then lay meat flat. Mix together all remaining ingredient, except rosemary, in a separate bowl. Slowly pour marinade over meat then sprinkle rosemary on top of it. Cook on low for 5-6 hours.

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## Crock Pot Orange Tofu



I think it's a wonderful community celebration when a baby is born. Friends and family gather to welcome the sweet little child and help the new parents with meals and errands and extra hands for diaper changes. Tonight, it's my turn

to bring dinner to some friends and I'm pretty sure that they already assume it's going to be something from the crock pot. The debate begins about what to make— it doesn't have to be for an occasion, let's admit that this debate happens practically every day, right?!

Let's see— vegetarian or dairy is requested and the meal needs to feed two adults and a 2-year-old, too. I'm guessing that pasta dishes and soups have already been dropped off or stocked in the freezer, so I decided to do an Asian tofu dish and serve it with rice. Tofu is a unique protein, but it cooks up nicely and can suck up a whole bunch of flavor from whatever it accompanies. There are different consistencies of tofu sold, but I suggest using an extra firm one, it's easiest to work with as a substitute for meat.

If you are scared of squishy food, you could make this dish with chicken instead. But give it a try— you might actually like tofu! The toughest thing about cooking it, is that sometimes it can really stick to the pan. Let it cook on each side without moving it around in the pan and then flip it quickly with a thin spatula. Enjoy!

1 brick of tofu, drained

3 T. olive oil

1/2 c. orange juice

1/4 c. honey

1/4 c. soy sauce

2 cloves of garlic, minced

1/2 medium onion, sliced thin

2 t. rice vinegar

1/2 t. paprika

12 oz. of any green vegetable (broccoli florets, snow peas, shredded cabbage, green beans or peas)

First you need to prep your tofu, it usually has an excessive amount of water in it that you want to drain off before cooking. Put a paper towel on a plate and then center the tofu on it. Add another paper towel up on top of the tofu and then put another plate on top. It looks like you've made a plate sandwich with the tofu in the middle. Add something heavy on top (can of food, metal pan, small child) and let sit for at least an hour. The paper towels will fill with water and the tofu will still have it's shape. Then cut tofu into 2-bite sized cubes.

Heat oil in a pan on medium heat. Brown tofu for 5-6 minutes on each side. Add the green vegetable, garlic and onion to the crock pot in that order, then put tofu on top. Mix the remaining ingredients in a separate bowl and then pour on top of everything in the crock pot. Cook on high for 3-4 hours and then serve with white rice.

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**Crock Pot Brisket-- easy,**



## medium and hard

I'm pretty sure everyone has a grandmother-aged person in their life that makes the "perfect brisket". It's moist, juicy, flavorful and pulls apart perfectly. We've tried and tried to repeat the old world secrets, but somehow our ovens continue to dry out the meat or make it tough to chew. Look no further— grandma might not have used a slow cooker, but these recipes are very easy and have amazing results.

Here's a great little nugget for you: my mom always cut off the last inch of the brisket before cooking it. I figured it was because of how she trimmed off the fat, skimming the top of the cut of meat and then cutting off the chunk at the end. I asked her about it and she said that it was how her grandmother did it. So I asked my grandmother why her mom cooked the meat in that particular way and she said, "because her pan was too small, the meat never seemed to fit right so she cut off the end so the brisket would lay flat." It's funny how traditions begin.

If you are looking for a pulled beef sandwich to serve at a spring BBQ, fork apart the meat when it is done, then top it with your favorite BBQ sauce and serve it on a braided roll. Oh— was it mean to say BRAIDED ROLL to those of you celebrating Passover? My bad.

### **EASY difficulty brisket**

1 3 lb. beef brisket

1 bottle italian dressing

Pour half the dressing over the brisket and let it marinate overnight. In the morning, move the meat into the slow cooker and top with the remaining dressing. Cook on low for 8 hours. Now, wasn't that easy?!

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### **MEDIUM difficulty brisket**

1 3 lb. brisket

1 medium-sized onion, sliced thin

1 12 oz. can of Coke (not diet)

1/2 c. ketchup

1 t. black pepper

1/2 t. cayenne pepper

pinch of salt

Place brisket into crock pot, use trivet if you have one. Surround meat with sliced onion. Mix together Coke and ketchup and pour on top of meat and onions. Sprinkle seasonings on everything. Cook for 8 hours on low or 4-5 hours on high.

If you want to vary the flavor, try using 12 oz. apple juice or 12 oz. of beer **INSTEAD** of the Coke.

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### **HARD difficulty brisket**

1 3 lb. brisket

1 t. of each seasonings: cracked black pepper, rosemary, paprika, parsley, celery seed

2-3 cloves garlic, chopped fine

1 t. olive oil

water

Rinse meat and pat dry. Using your fingers or a pastry brush, lightly coat meat with olive oil. Then mix together all

seasonings and coat meat in dry rub. Let marinate overnight in the refrigerator. In the morning, take meat out and sprinkle with garlic. Heat up a pan and brown meat on all sides, then put meat in crock pot. Add enough water to the crock pot to cover the bottom of the pot. Also, if you have a trivet that fits in your crock pot, use that under the meat. Cook on low for 6 hours.