

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.

Crock Pot Scalloped Potatoes



works out fine.

After some trial and error with cooking potatoes in the crock pot, I've finally got some advice for you. First off...don't try to make mashed potatoes. The long amount of time and lack of high heat sort of ruin the effect. But, if you want to make them on the stove and then keep them heated in a crock pot, that

I really wanted to make a side dish of potatoes that was easy to cook and didn't take an excessive amount of prep work (or extra dishes or pots). These scalloped potatoes turned out bubbly and flavorful without having to add a canned creamy soup. Give this a try, especially if you have two crock pots, so you can do a meat main dish in one and this delicious accompaniment in the other. Enjoy!

4-5 medium-sized potatoes, skin on

1 medium onion

1/4 c. flour

2 T. parsley flakes

1 T. salt

1 t. black pepper

1 1/2 c. milk

paprika

1 c. shredded cheese (try cheddar or mozzarella)

Use a food processor to slice potatoes and onions thin (this is much thinner than what you can do with a knife!). Put in pot and then mix in flour and seasonings. Smooth out mixture so that is it flat, then pour milk over entire surface area. Potatoes should not be completely covered by milk. Shake paprika on top as garnish. Cook on high for 2-3 hours or low for 3-4 hours. Stir in shredded cheese before serving.

(This is a really good recipe to use a [crock pot liner](#), the edges crisp first and get stuck to the sides. If you use a liner, it is much easier to clean out the pot! You can buy some by clicking [here](#).)

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!!

Crock Pot Creamy Tomato Soup

I understand that the red label of canned tomato soup is probably very patriotic and that eating grilled cheese and tomato soup is one of our commandments or laws or requirements as Americans. I support that, I do. But— I don't think my grilled cheese sandwich deserves to bathe in a mixture of weird canned goop and water. It needs more than that. So today I made homemade creamy tomato soup.

I think the key difference here is the spices and the heavy cream, you just can't get those flavors in a can. Another detail that is critical to this recipe is the use of an

immersion hand blender. Thirty seconds of power will take this soup from delicious to heavenly. If you don't have an immersion hand blender, then you can cool your soup off and then put it into a blender to puree, then return it to the crock pot, add the heavy cream and heat it back up. That way is more work but will deliver the same smooth result.

Your soup should have an equal counterpart– a perfect grilled cheese sandwich. But you have to define that for yourself. For me, it's swirled pumpernickel/rye bread with swiss and havarti cheeses. For my kids, it's American cheese on whole wheat. For my husband, it's italian bread with sharp cheddar and colby jack. I am willing to entertain everyone's favorites, since the soup is so easy to make. Another trick for your sandwich is to change up from using butter or margarine on the outside of your bread– try using a light smear of mayonnaise instead and get a sweeter, crisper result. Or you can quickly dip the sandwich in a couple beaten eggs and turn your grilled cheese into a monte cristo instead. Discover whatever combination tickles your taste buds and then let it swell with the sweetness of the soup. Enjoy!

2 14 oz. cans of diced tomatoes

1 small onion, diced

2-3 cloves of garlic, chopped

1 bay leaf

1 t. of each seasoning: salt, black pepper, rosemary, oregano and celery seed

1 T. sugar

8 oz. heavy cream

Combine all ingredients except heavy cream in the crock pot. Cook on low for 4 hours. Remove bay leaf. Use immersion hand blender and puree until smooth. Add heavy cream, stir and heat

for one more hour. Serve with your favorite grilled cheese sandwich, of course!

Crock Pot Creamy Corn

Not to be too corny, but I'm a big fan of corn. I love fresh local corn on the cob in the summer, corn chowder soup in the winter, corn muffins, popcorn at the movies, canned cream corn, kettle corn at the apple festival, even cooking with corn oil.

I've got some great leftover meat from this weekend, but I really want a yummy side dish to go with it to make it seem like a whole new meal. It's already the middle of the afternoon, so I'm short on time, but this is a perfect time to make a delicious corn side dish as an accompaniment.

The contrast of the sweet corn and creamy cheese to the sting of the jalapenos is a great chemistry. When you make this dish and someone tells you how much they love it, just smile and say, "awww shucks!"

1 32 oz. bag of frozen corn

1 small yellow onion, chopped

4 T. butter, melted

1/2 c. milk

1 T. parsley

1/2 t. salt

1 t. black pepper

3 T. chopped jalapeno slices (from the jar, not fresh)

8 oz. whipped cream cheese

Put corn and onion in crock pot first, then stir in melted butter and milk. Add in all the seasonings and the jalapenos and stir again. Scoop the cream cheese onto mixture, leaving scoops all over. Cook on high for 2 hours, stir cream cheese into mixture and then heat for half an hour more.

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.

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.

Crock Pot Sloppy Joes

Here's your mission if you choose to accept it: *make dinner*

for four adults and two kids when you are staying at a friends house, you found one pound of ground turkey in the freezer and there is a pantry of assorted cans. And.... GO!

While visiting friends this week, I figured it was only appropriate to help with meals since they are at work all day. I know there is a crock pot on staff in the kitchen, so I accepted this mission without hesitation. Crock pot cooking is just the easiest way to make a crowd-pleasing dish without making a huge mess.

With our mix of adults and kids, I figured crock pot sloppy joes would be great. But with only one pound of meat, I knew that I needed to pump up the dish with some added ingredients. This recipe worked out great because it kept the true flavor of sloppy joes, but included some extra protein. Try this out next time you have to feed friends or family members or are looking for a no-fuss take on an old-time favorite. Enjoy!

1 lb. ground turkey

1/2 medium onion, diced (or 3 T. dried minced onion)

1 green pepper, seeded and diced

1 14 oz. can of black beans, drained and rinsed

1 6 oz. can of tomato paste

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 t. cumin

1 t. black pepper

1 t. chili powder

1 t. garlic powder

1/2 t. salt

1 t. worchestershire sauce

2 t. apple cider vinegar

1 t. yellow mustard

1 c. tomato juice or vegetable juice

1/4 c. water

Brown ground meat thoroughly in 1-2 t. of vegetable oil. Then add green peppers and (fresh) onions, cook until they are soft, and add to crock pot. In a separate bowl, mix together the rest of the ingredients and the pour on top of cooked items in crock pot, stir together. Add in the black beans and stir once more. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Serve on hamburger buns for traditional presentation or use King's Hawaiian Original Rolls to make cute little sloppy joe sliders.

Crock Pot Fish Chowder

This recipe has evolved from an amazing chowder that I once had at the Columbus International Festival in Ohio. I think it was the Scandanavian table that was honoring their long-standing countrymen's careers of treacherous trips on the ocean. I think it was really to honor the countrywomen's careers of having boatloads of fish to cook and trying to come up with new recipes that didn't resemble a fish face.

Now this recipe can easily be done in a pot on the stove and done in an hour, but then the flavors wouldn't have a chance to fester all together. I prefer it in the crock pot, usually made from leftover salmon or tilapia. You could probably use halibut, red snapper or maybe even some trout if you wanted to, depending on what you like. If you don't have leftovers to use, then just throw the (deboned, please) fish filets into a

pan with a little butter, salt and pepper and then bake it, let it cool and flake it. Realistically, a budget-minded mama could also use a couple cans of pink salmon and still have a similar result.

Well, if we wanted to, we could start by sauteeing up some diced bacon with the mirepoix (fancy word for chopped carrots, celery and onions) and then including it all in the pot for a smoky and salty addition. Or, we could throw in half a pound of shrimp at the end of the day and make the chowder heartier. But I keep it simple and it's still a crowd-pleaser and probably a little healthier too.

4 carrots, peeled and diced

3 celery stalks, diced

1 medium onion, diced

1 chopped zucchini, unpeeled

3 cups vegetable broth

2 bay leaves

1 clove garlic, minced

salt and pepper

1/2 – 1 lb fish– no skin, no bones; cooked, cooled and flaked

(1 T. corn starch dissolved into 2 cups cold milk)

Put all ingredients (except corn starch and milk) in the crockpot, with the fish being last. Cook 4-6 hours on high. Remove bay leaves. Dissolve corn starch in cold milk and then add to the pot 1 hour before serving.

If you'd like to add some variety, offer cheddar cheese, chopped scallions and puffy oyster crackers to top your fish chowder. Or a toy boat, if you can find one that hasn't been in the bath.

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?!

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.

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.