

# 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.

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# Crock Pot Cheese-Stuffed Meatballs



Already looking good!

While on vacation over the holidays, we stayed at the Happy Pelican, a wonderful beach house on the North Carolina coast. I love the delight of staying somewhere with a fully-stocked kitchen AND a beautiful view. My sister-in-law and I figured out a week's worth of menus, split the to do list, and prepped easy meals to enjoy that required minimal kitchen time and maximum beach time. It was so much easier to dine all together at the house instead of trying to coordinate eating out!



Cheese-Stuffed Meatball Sub, broiled to perfection!

But with eight healthy appetites to satisfy, we needed to cook mass quantity. By the end of the week, we were down to hamburger meat, string cheese and a few wrinkly vegetables. Easy enough! Just what I needed for these cheese-stuffed meatballs. It takes a little more handy work than our normal crock pot meals, but it was delicious! The kids loved the meatballs and the adults enjoyed meatball subs broiled to a crusty perfection.



Forget the bun and just enjoy the cheese-stuffed meatballs!

If you go on vacation and the house isn't well-equipped with small kitchen appliances, I highly suggest bringing your crock pot along. Enjoy!

## Crock Pot Cheese-Stuffed Meatballs

Serves 8-10

2 lbs ground beef

2 eggs

1 c. panko bread crumbs

1/2 c. shredded parmesan

1 c. shredded carrots

2 T. Fresh parsley, chopped

1/2 sweet onion, diced

1 32 oz. jar spaghetti sauce

6 individually-wrapped string cheese

4 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

8 hoagie buns

Unwrap the string cheese and cut each log into 5 pieces (30 pieces total). Set the cheese aside. You are going to make approx. 30 meatballs. Mix together the meat, carrots, onion, eggs, parsley, parmesan, and panko. The mixture should not be liquidy. If it is, add a little more bread crumbs. Eggs are

not always the same size (did you know that?!). Take about a golf-ball sized portion and roll into a ball. Flatten it between your palms. Place a cut piece of string cheese in the middle of the patty and then carefully form the ball back around the cheese. You want the cheese to be completely surrounded by the meatball mixture. Place it in the crock pot and repeat 29 more times, approximately, or until the meat mixture is gone.

Wash your hands. Don't be gross.

Pour the jar of spaghetti sauce across all of the meatballs and then cook on high for 3-4 hours or on low for 6 hours. Your sauce will be a little more watery when it's done because of all of the juices escaping the meat and veggies. These meatballs are now ready to serve.

If you want to make meatball subs, put 3-4 meatballs in each hoagie bun, cover with some shredded cheese and place on a cookie sheet. Broil in the oven until the cheese is melted and starting to brown, but not burnt. That would be gross.

Cooked meatballs will fill refrigerate well and freeze well, but be careful reheating as the cheese may ooze out. It will all still taste delicious, it just might not be as pretty.

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## Crock Pot Dirty Rice

Do you ever stock up on meat when it's on sale and freeze it, only to then have to come up with a meal that specifically uses that "great deal" before it gets freezer burnt?! Yeah,

that's what I'm going through today. I thawed out a package of sweet italian ground sausage. I'm sure I bought it with some sort of intention... but then it got buried in the freezer under half a dozen packages of frozen vegetables. After making winter vegetable soup, I found my meat stash and now had to face the task of figuring out what to make with the ground sausage.

Normally, you can substitute ground sausage in most ground beef or ground turkey recipes. It makes great chili, an incredible lasagna and even is creative in meatloaf. But I wanted to work on a recipe that truly highlighted the spices of the sweet italian sausage. You can use any variety of sausage, just understand that the flavors will ultimately completely change up the overall dish— so if you want hot sausage or you want to un-case a beer bratwurst, that's totally fine. You can play with the flavors by changing up your meat selection— or using up something you find in the bottom of your freezer!

So tonight, we're having crock pot dirty rice. I love that this dish uses the word "dirty", but it's so true. This is the antithesis of steamed, white rice. It muddles together all the flavors from the spicy meat and the sweet vegetables and somehow the tomato paste marries it all together. Yes, that's what this is— a "dirty" "marriage" of flavors. Ha! I hope you enjoy this classic spicy one-pot meal and that it warms up your winter night.

1 lb sausage, crumbled and browned

3 cups water

1 cup uncooked long grain rice

1/2 large onion, finely chopped

1/2 large red bell pepper, finely chopped

1/2 large yellow bell pepper, finely chopped

3 stalks finely chopped celery

1 15 oz. can kidney beans, not drained

1 6 oz. can tomato paste

1 beef bouillion cube

1 tsp salt

1/2 tsp red pepper flakes

1 T. chopped fresh parsley

Brown meat and put in crock pot first. Then using same pan, brown onions and peppers until soft, then add to crock pot. Add remaining ingredients, except for parsley. Stir. Cook on low for 4 hours. Serve into bowls and sprinkle with fresh parsley.

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## Crock Pot Parsnip and Potato Soup

I'm totally enjoying soups this week and I hope you are getting a chance to enjoy some of these recipes too. I love it when I can make an entire meal in ONE pot and feed the whole family. This soup is a variation on my crock pot potato soup recipe (search for it in the recipe index) and adds in the unique sweetness of parsnips and carrots and sweet onions.

Even though it's almost spring, we still need to survive on the rest of winter's vegetables. If you can already grow



things in your garden or windowsill, try adding fresh herbs like flat parsley, dill or chives to your soup when it is done cooking. I think you'll find the promise of spring in the soothing warmth of this chowder. Enjoy!

4 medium potatoes, peeled and diced

3 medium parsnips, peeled and diced

3 medium carrots, peeled and diced

2 stalks celery, diced

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 medium sweet onion, chopped

3 c. water

1 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

1 t. celery seed

1 c. milk

1 T. corn starch

1 can cream-style corn

Put all vegetables and seasonings in crock pot, cover with water. Cook on high for 4 hours. When vegetables are all soft, dissolve corn starch in milk and then add to crock pot. Add cream-style corn and mix ingredients together. Cook on low one more hour. Use an immersion blender and puree the soup until thick and creamy. Serve with fresh parsley, dill or chives on top.

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# Crock Pot Pork Roast

Ok fans, this one is really easy. It might surprise you to think about doing a roast in your crock pot, but again—anything that can be cooked in the oven, can be cooked in the crock pot. I started this roast while I drank my breakfast coffee and it was done by lunchtime. Dinner tonight is going to be a breeze. (I should note that my crockpot cooks quickly, even on low. You will want to use a meat thermometer to determine when your roast is cooked through. Pork is done when the internal temperature of the meat reached 160 degrees).



I like that the dry rub on this roast is simple and you can vary up the flavor and switch out other seasonings, if you prefer. I think that the brown sugar really complements the flavor of the pork, but if you'd rather cut down on the sweetness or calories, you can use other seasonings and leave out some of the brown sugar.

Enjoy this roast from your crockpot and savor the flavors. Add a couple side dishes and you'll have a complete meal for dinner tonight or even entertaining. Enjoy!

2 lb. pork loin rib end roast

1 t. thyme

1 t. parsley

1 t. garlic powder

1 t. cumin

1/2 t. black pepper

1/2 t. salt

3 T. brown sugar

1/2 c. water

Rinse roast and pat dry, then place in crock pot on metal trivet (this lets the juices run without letting the meat sit in the juice). Mix all seasonings and brown sugar in a separate bowl and place mix on the meat, patting down with your fingers until mixture is evenly distributed. Add 1/2 c. water to crock pot, but do not pour it on top of meat. Cook on low for 4-6 hours.

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## Crock Pot Vegetable Soup For Men



I am fortunate to have a husband that loves my cooking and loves to eat. He tries everything I make and is very agreeable about most of it. But today, I had the privilege of watching my husband cook his first crock pot meal. And it turned out great!

Today's soup includes a lot of produce, but unlike my normal vegetarian vegetable soup which has small bits of lots of

vegetables, my hubby's recipe includes chunkier cuts of vegetables and not as much variety. The real kicker of this soup is the topping— add a few jalapeno peppers and you've got a treat to eat without any meat! ☐

I definitely encourage you to offer the crock pot up for family cooking adventures. It's great to take with you on road trips to save money instead of eating out. It's a great way to teach kids about cooking because there's less risk of burning food or fingers. It's also a great way to add healthier meals into your busy lives.

So kudos to my husband for coming up with this great recipe. Maybe he'll do the dishes, too. Enjoy!

2 28 oz cans diced tomatoes

1 15 oz. can sweet kernel corn, drained

1 zucchini, chopped

4 stalks celery, cleaned and chopped

1 medium onion, diced

2 medium potatoes, skins left on and diced

2-3 cloves garlic, chopped

1 t. celery seed

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

1 T. dried parsley

TOPPING: jar of jalapeno pepper slices

Add all ingredients (except jalapeno slices) to pot and stir. Cook on high for 4 hours. When serving, add a few chilled jalapeno pepper slices straight from the jar, to each bowl. If

your man likes it hotter, try a few shakes of Tabasco sauce, too!

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## Crock Pot Cowpea Soup



Most of you probably just read the title of this recipe and giggled. Yes, cowpea sounds a lot like cow pie. In fact, cow pee makes it seem even more funny. So if you haven't heard of a cowpea before, let me tell you a little about it. But seriously, you can stop giggling

now. Cowpeas are meaty little legumes that come in long pods. Once you pull the string off, you'll see the tightly packed peas pop out of the pod. They are sometimes classified as a black-eyed pea, but you can also get purple-eyed ones, they can be green, white or dark in color and they are hearty little nuggets to cook.

When you can get them fresh, you are good to go once they are out of the pod. If you get them dried, then you need to soak them in water overnight for about 8 hours and then rinse them a few times before you throw them in the pot.

Cowpeas are common in a lot of African recipes and provide excellent protein in many soups and rice dishes. These "beans" are also used in a lot of southern recipes in the USA. I even found a great recipe online for chow chow salsa that included canned black-eyed peas, but would be awesome with fresh cowpeas instead.

I thought that split pea soup sounded great to make this week—fresh cowpeas are readily available at my local farmers market right now and if I make it now and freeze it, it will make a great meal later this fall when the weather cools off a bit. I decided not to go the traditional route and cook the soup with a ham hock, but to keep it vegetarian instead. If you'd like to, you can add diced cooked ham or turkey sausage after you puree the soup and then heat it for an additional hour to warm the meat. Either way, the soup is filling and satisfying and an easy meal when served with a crusty bread.

Kudos to you for trying something new. Cowpeas are a nice variation, especially if your family already likes peas and beans. Plus, if you can get them fresh, it's fun to pull the string and unleash the pea from the cow. Enjoy!

2 c. fresh cowpeas

1 medium onion, chopped

2-3 carrots, chopped

2 stalks celery, chopped

3 garlic cloves, chopped

2 parsnips, peeled and chopped

3 c. water

1 t. salt

1 t. black pepper

1 T. fresh parsley, chopped

Put all ingredients in the crock pot and cook on high for 4-6 hours. Using a hand blender, puree soup in the crock pot. If desired, add 1/2 lb. diced cooked ham or turkey sausage to the pot and heat for one additional hour on low.

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# 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.

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# 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.

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# Crock Pot Beef Stew

So after the amazing stroganoff last week, somehow I still wanted to make more beef. (I think we had BBQ chicken one too many times over the holiday weekend.) So even though it is summer, I thought some hearty beef stew would satisfy my craving for red meat. The nice part about this meal and the hot weather is that a small serving is enough to satisfy and you can use local produce to really enrich the flavors of the stew. I am adding some extra vegetables to my stew that are in season, ripe and fresh right now. Check out your local farmer's market and see what vegetables look good to you. Enjoy!

1 lb. beef, cut into stew meat

1 c. baby carrots

4 stalks celery, cut into 1-inch sections

3 potatoes, skins left on, cut into small chunks

1 small onion, cut into small chunks

1 medium zucchini, cut into 1-inch sections

1 ear of corn, cut kernels off the cob

4-6 oz. fresh green beans, cut into 1-inch sections

2 c. water

3 cloves garlic, chopped

1/2 t. celery seed

1/2 t. paprika

1 T. parsley

1/2 t. salt

1 t. black pepper

To finish: 1 T. corn starch dissolved in 1/3 c. cold water

Put all ingredients into the crock pot and give it all a stir. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Add water with dissolved corn starch and heat for 1/2 hour on high. Remove bay leaves before serving.