

Summer Series, Day Two: Crock Pot Steamed Summer Vegetables



Roll out of bed and out onto the hammock as the sun rises and crests over the ocean and dunes.

The sun was beaming in the window when I finally opened my eyes this morning. I had to look around for a minute and remember there wasn't school or camp or work or anything to rush off to this morning. Today's to do list included the pool and the beach. I was pretty sure I could accomplish those tasks so I rolled back off to sleep as the sun soared into the sky and the light in the room subdued. Granted, it was only another hour or so before my kids were knocking at the door and ready for breakfast, but I awoke again with a great calm and a readiness for an adventure.

One thing doesn't change no matter where I sleep— my desperate need for coffee in the morning. Lucky for me, [Ooh La La](#)'s kitchen was totally equipped. Every appliance (COFFEE POT AND KEURIG!) needed was readily available and the cabinets were full of the comforts of home— not just dishes and cups, but tupperware, travel mugs, grill tools, fruit baskets. I was completely at home even though I was still uncaffeinated!

After an easy breakfast, I skipped off to the grocery store,

categorized list in hand. Oh, you missed that in the last post? HERE YOU GO. But whoa- I must warn you... the grocery store was full of crazy people without a plan. It was like playing Supermarket Sweep but with a Hunger Games approach. Despite my greatest organization, it still took longer than anticipated to get through the store, but the good news is that everything I needed was in stock. Since I brought all of my basics and non-perishables with me, I didn't really need the aisles, just a lap around the perimeter of the store.



Crock Pot Steamed Summer Vegetables are a great way to create a healthy and seasonal side dish.

While I know that I'll be at the local Farmer's Market on Tuesday, I still needed some produce today. We were planning on a BBQ tonight with hamburgers and hot dogs, so I decided that I would steam some veggies in the crock pot as my side. The good news was that the store also had great little packages of fresh herbs and I totally stocked up.

The groceries and prep work for dinner tonight took just over an hour and then it was off to the pool! [The house seriously has it's own swimming pool](#). I want to live here. Like, not just this week, but from here on out. The pool is just big enough for all the kids and grown ups to get in and play. The youngest played on the stairs mostly and the oldest kept

trying to see if his cannonball could splash over the fence. Oh wait— you thought I meant my oldest kid? Nope, that was my husband trying to tsunami the pool!



Sand dunes in the Outer Banks help protect these narrow islands from harsh weather.

After the pool and a light lunch we crossed over the sand dunes to the beach. There is something about the waves that is so cathartic. I feel such peace at the waves, listening to them crash and then pull everything negative away. There is something that reaches my soul when I stand at the waves and realize I have to relinquish all control. I can't make them stop. I can't make them crash. I can't protect my sand castle or demand that the water fill the mote. I can just breathe and trust that none of it is my handiwork and that the water will continue to rise and fall and I don't have to do anything. Much like dinner tonight— there is nothing left to do but breathe and enjoy.

Crock Pot Steamed Summer Vegetables

Serves 6-8

4 zucchini, quartered lengthwise

1 lb asparagus, rinsed and woody ends removed

1 package button mushrooms (doesn't matter what size package, they are mushrooms, they'll fit!)

6-8 twigs of fresh thyme

3-4 twigs of fresh rosemary

1 c. water



Layer vegetables and fresh herbs in the crock pot so the flavors are infused throughout the dish.

Layer vegetables and herbs in the crockpot– I put in zucchini first, then 2-3 sprigs thyme; add asparagus and a couple sprigs of rosemary; then the mushrooms and the remaining seasonings. Pour in the cup of water around the edges so that the water covers the bottom of the crock pot. The vegetables will release enough additional liquid to continue the cooking process. Cook on low for 4 hours, then serve. You can remove the herbs or use them as garnish.

Crock Pot Pot Pie



Did anyone else just do a double take to the title of this recipe? It's funny to read Pot Pot and not giggle... but this pot pie is indeed made in your CROCK pot. I guess I could just call it crock pot pie, but then it makes me think of ooey gooey

apple filling and flaky, buttery crusts and sorry fans... that is not this recipe. I will, however, promise that this recipe is for a new favorite for your whole family. It has meat, dairy, vegetable and carb and if you serve it with a side of fruit (maybe cranberry sauce??), you've fulfilled every food group. Except dessert... and I'm ok with that still being it's own food group.

I will probably repost this recipe around Thanksgiving, because it's the PERFECT thing to do with leftover turkey. I actually roasted a whole turkey this past weekend and have enjoyed easy meals all week from all the leftover meat. You can also do this dish just as easily with a rotisserie chicken that you pick up at the grocery store though.

Here's another worthwhile note: I use a pancake mix that is entirely egg-free because my son has allergies... so I just made

pancake mix according to the directions on the box for 12-14 pancakes (2 cups mix, 1.5 cups water). I would recommend that you follow the directions on YOUR box, so if it asks for eggs, you should probably include it.

Also- please be cautious when you put the crock pot (removed from the heating unit) into the oven and then taking it out. I scalded my arm nicely on this one because I wasn't paying attention. Ahhh, the things I'm willing to do for great cooking and blogging... yeah, you're welcome. ☺ Enjoy!

1-1.5 lbs cooked turkey or chicken, skin and bones removed, then meat cut into bite-sized pieces

2 cans cream of chicken soup

1 lb bag of frozen mixed vegetables, thawed

1 c. frozen corn, thawed

1/2 t. black pepper

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. thyme

1/2 t. rosemary

2/3 c. milk

(separately combine pancake mix and water mixed to the equivalent to 12-14 pancakes... so for me 2 c. mix and 1.5 c. water, beaten together until fluffy)

Put all ingredients in crock pot and mix together until everything is well coated. Cook on low for 4 hours, then remove carefully from crock pot's heating unit. Pour pancake mixture on top of hot mixture and bake at 350 degrees for 30-40 minutes until top is slightly browned and crisping on the edges. Remove crock pot from oven carefully and cool for 10 minutes before serving.

Crock Pot French Dip

At this time of year, everyone is trying to hang on to at least a shred of the New Year's resolution that they made only a couple weeks ago. This recipe is a great one to help— you can eat healthier and save money by making French dip. You don't need a lot of meat on your sandwiches and you get to savor so much of the flavor by using the cooking liquid as the au jus. Plus, you don't need to add extra condiments, cheese, oil or any other typical sandwich toppings that just add fat and calories anyway. (You can also make a great salad and top it with the leftover meat as a second meal!)

This meal was inspired by my friend T.D.H. who made these sandwiches for her family last week. I altered her recipe a little, but I appreciated her recommendation. Thank you! I hope you enjoy these crock pot French dip sandwiches so much that you share it with your friends, too. ☐

1.5-2 lb. London Broil, trimmed
32 oz. beef stock (I use low-sodium)
1/4 c. soy sauce (again, low-sodium)
1/2 medium yellow onion, quartered
3 cloves garlic, smashed
1 t. celery seed
1/2 t. thyme
1/2 t. rosemary
2 bay leaves, whole

1 t. whole black peppercorns

Serve on 4-6 crusty french rolls

Heat a flat skillet with 1 T. olive oil in it. Sear your London Broil on both sides, but do not cook meat through. Put all other ingredients in the crock pot and then delicately place the meat in. Cook on high for 3 hours. Remove meat, slice across the grain, then put the meat back in the crock pot for an additional hour. Serve meat on warmed, crusty french rolls. Remove bay leaves from the crock pot and discard. Either drain the remaining liquid through a cheese cloth– or be lazy like me... I used a ladle and removed 1/2 c. of the liquid for each sandwich and served it in a ramekin. So what if some rosemary or thyme comes along for the ride, it just adds more flavor!

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 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 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 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.

Crock Pot Beef Stew

Last night I used my foodie knowledge to help a friend through a stressful moment. I described my love affair with Trader Joe's grocery store in such detail that she learned about my secret ongoing shopping list, what each item is that I crave and how I use one dish, three ways. By the end of my "foodologue" I think I had actually BORED her out of her anxiety attack.

It made me start thinking about comfort foods. For many

people, it's what our mummies used to make for us or maybe what we had at favorite holidays. I wonder what my boys will recall as their favorite foods, twenty years from now. Today's recipe might top the list. The last time I made my beef stew, my boys and my husband all were members of the clean plate club. Definitely a recipe to repeat often! It's also easy to throw half of the finished product into tupperware and freeze it for another dinner, another time.

1 to 1 and 1/2 lbs beef stew meat, cubed
8 oz. baby carrots
5 stalks celery, cleaned and cut
6-7 red potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters
1 medium onion, cut into chunks
8 oz. frozen green beans
2 cloves garlic, chopped fine
2 bay leaves
1/2 t. rosemary
1 cup beef bouillion
3/4 cup leftover red wine
1 can condensed tomato soup (don't add any water)
salt and pepper
(1 T. corn starch and 1/2 c. water to finish it off)

Dump everything into the crockpot. Set on low and cook for 8-9 hours until meat and vegetables are soft. Remove the meat and veggies and then mix in 1 T. corn starch that has been dissolved into 1/2 cup water. When the gravy thickens up, dump the meat and veggies back into the crockpot, mix it all together and serve.