

Summer Series, Day Six: Seafood Paella



This one pot dish is literally named for being made in a pot. It's the original one-dish cuisine.

This, my friends. This is the quintessential dinner that melds together land and sea and balances the forces of nature to create an amazing meal that would make even mermaids and pirates cheer. With more protein than a Brazilian meat festival, this one pot recipe will make you lift your anchors and set full speed ahead toward the coast. And you'll thank me for it. I thanked me for it- I've never made this dish before, but with so much fresh seafood available here in the Outer Banks, it was a challenge I was eager to attempt and declare victory for all.

There are a few more steps than normal because of the complexity of textures in paella (pronounced PIE-Ay-uhhhh) so bear with me and I'll try to break it down step by step so you

can recreate this on your next seaside adventure.

First, gather all of your ingredients. It's helpful to know what goes in at what point so you can simplify your timing.



1. Brown your boneless, skinless chicken thighs over medium-high heat to get a quick sear on the outside. The chicken will have plenty of time to finish cooking the whole way through when it's in the crock pot, but you want to seal in the flavor. After removing from heat, chop chicken into bite-size pieces.



2. Using the same skillet, brown the sliced andouille sausage quickly on both sides and remove from heat.



3. Put brown rice, seasonings, and fresh vegetables in the crock pot. Add broth and give it all a good stir. The turmeric and smoked paprika will flavor the entire dish but begins with this first step. Add bite-size pieces of chicken and cooked andouille sausage. Cook on low for six hours or until all liquid is absorbed.



4. After time is up, it's ok to remove the crock pot lid at this point and give everything a really good stir. Try to keep rice from sticking to the bottom of the crock pot.



5. Add seafoods– shrimp, sea scallops and clams. Be sure to properly clean your seafood before adding to the pot. A sandy clam does not add flavor! If you are peeling and deveining your own shrimp, you need [THIS TOOL](#). Seriously, just get one for yourself at the start of this trip. (You'll use it for the Crock Pot Low Country Boil as well.)

Cook on high for up to one hour– shrimp should be pink and clams should have all opened. You do not want to overcook seafood so try to be nearby for this last step.

And that's it! You have just mastered the Old World, cultivated classic of a seafood paella (technically a mixed paella because of the chicken, but let's focus on the gifts from the sea and the amazing local seafood markets located in the Outer Banks.)

Thank you to the owners of the [Ooh La La beach house](#) here in

Avon. This dish used many of the tools and cooking accessories and your stocked kitchen did not disappoint. I had everything I needed to prep, clean and cook all of my ingredients for this meal. This kitchen set-up made everything easy, including a spacious dishwasher to handle my mess!

Crock Pot Seafood Paella

Serves 6

1.5 cups brown rice

3 chicken thighs

7-8 oz andouille sausage

1 red bell pepper, sliced

2 stalks celery, sliced

1/2 onion, sliced

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 t. turmeric

1 t. smoked paprika

2 cups white wine

2 cups chicken broth

1 lb jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined

1/2 lb bay scallops

1 dozen clams, in shells

Brown your boneless, skinless chicken thighs over medium-high heat to get a quick sear on the outside. The chicken will have plenty of time to finish cooking the whole way through when it's in the crock pot, but you want to seal in the flavor. After removing from heat, chop chicken into bite-size pieces. Using the same skillet, brown the sliced andouille sausage quickly on both sides and remove from heat. Put brown rice, seasonings, and fresh vegetables in the crock pot. Add broth and give it all a good stir. The turmeric and smoked paprika will flavor the entire dish but begins with this first step. Add bite-size pieces of chicken and cooked andouille sausage. Cook on low for six hours or until all liquid is absorbed. After time is up, it's ok to remove the crock pot lid at this point and give everything a really good stir. Try to keep rice from sticking to the bottom of the crock pot. Add seafoods— shrimp, sea scallops and clams. Be sure to properly

clean your seafood before adding to the pot. Cook on high for up to one hour– shrimp should be pink and clams should have all opened.

Summer Series, Day Three: Crock Pot Low Country Boil



This meal requires no silverware– or plates!

Dinner tonight was epic. Seriously. I've been dreaming about a low country boil for weeks now, but not just the flavors fusing together, but enjoying it with the salty ocean air, the sound of the waves, and the openness of a housetop porch. And indeed–my prophecy has come true!

After another fabulous day at [Ooh La La, our amazing beach house for the week](#), we enjoyed this one pot wonder just as the sun was setting. We started today at the [Avon Pier](#), watching skilled fisherman catch buckets of fish and even some shark! Yes, the North Carolina coast has been ridden with shark incidents in recent weeks, but this was intentional baiting and catching of these dangerous creatures. No joke– it was

thrilling and terrifying to see even little ones brought to the surface and hauled up to within feet of us.

We attempted to go out for lunch today since dinner was already going and the pier really made us work up an appetite. Lunch was ok– but not the local fare I was hoping for; I’m not convinced that the “Catch of the Day” didn’t arrive frozen in a box the week before. The kids didn’t want to eat their fish sticks... because they didn’t taste like the ones at home (well, duh!). So while we all enjoyed the air conditioning and endless fountain beverages, I’m not convinced it was worth it to go out to eat.

If the local restaurants aren’t appealing, make sure you stop by the local seafood markets instead– you can get fresh (never frozen) fish and creatures that came directly from the ocean. The Outer Banks is a prime location for tuna, soft-shelled crabs, shrimp, and many other options... including the sharks I mentioned before.



It is totally worth the extra buck at the seafood market to have them peel and devein your shrimp instead! But if you

do it yourself, click
and buy the tool in
the link provided!

We then returned “home” for another afternoon of swimming. I peeled and [deveined](#) the pound of shrimp I picked up at the seafood market to add as the last step of the low country boil. Mental note to self– it is totally worth the up-charge to have someone else [do this process](#). After removing the tubes of excrement from my crustaceans, I was no longer as excited to devour these treats of the sea. I mean, come on... I can't unsee or unfeel that. But fresh is always the best option and local is a total perk. You'll want your own [shrimp tool](#) to peel and devein in one swipe if you are getting fresh raw shrimp.

The Crock Pot Low Country Boil requires a few extra steps than you normally see in Dinner Is A Crock recipes, but since we were in and out of the house all day, it was not challenging at all. Again– the point of taking my [crock pot](#) to the beach was so that we could eat well without interrupting our adventures. Dinner tonight was a total success and everyone ate well after our beautiful day in the Outer Banks. If you haven't checked out the house yet, be sure to [CLICK HERE](#) and see about planning your trip to Ooh La La.

Crock Pot Low Country Bowl

Serves 4

3 ears of yellow corn; peeled, cleaned and broken in half
8 baby red potatoes (golf-ball sized or smaller)
1/2 sweet onion, cut into chunks
4 stalks celery, cut into 3-inch sections
1/4 c. Old Bay Seasonings
3 springs fresh dill
1 12 oz. can of beer (I used Yeungling)

2 c. water

1 14 oz. package Hillshire Farms Lit'l Smokies or other cocktail links

1 lb. large fresh raw shrimp, peeled and deveined



Put all of the vegetables in the [crock pot](#) with the water, seasonings and fresh dill. Add the beer. Cook on low for four hours or until the potatoes are fork tender. Add smokies or cocktail links and add another hour on low. Let the crock pot turn to the “keep warm” setting until you are close to dinner time. When ready, add the shrimp to the pot and set on high for 30 minutes– or just until the shrimp have turned pink. Drain crock pot into a strainer and shake out as much liquid as possible.

Pour the steaming awesomeness directly onto a table (covered in a plastic bag and layers of newspaper) and enjoy with your fingers. No silverware or condiments necessary.

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.

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.