

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 Blueberry Cobbler

Forget dinner– let's skip straight to dessert. What could possibly be better than dumping everything in the crock pot and having your entire house filled with the glorious, sweet, satisfying smell of freshly baked dessert?! Cooking dessert in the crock pot requires a little more attention to detail than the normal dump-and-go meal prep, but I think you'll really like this recipe. In all honesty, it still only took me 6 minutes from start to finish to get everything into the crock pot. Since this is a slow cooking method, you won't dry out or burn the edges of your tasty treat like you might in the regular oven. Plus, it is way better to use the crock pot for a few hours than to heat up the entire house with conventional baking.

This cobbler recipe can also be made using a variety of other fruits. Go for what is in season, grown locally or on sale in the freezer section; I would suggest trying cherries, peaches, apples, mixed berries or maybe some ripe pears. If you want this dish to be even more divine, throw in a 1/2 c. of butterscotch morsels or chocolate chips with the top layer. Enjoy!

1 c. flour

2 t. baking powder

1/2 t. salt

1/2 c. granulated sugar

1/2 c. packed brown sugar

2 eggs

2 t. vanilla

2 t. butter, melted

1/2 c. half and half or milk

16 oz. fresh or frozen blueberries

topping:

1 c. quick oats

1/3 c. flour

2 t. melted butter

1/2 t. cinnamon

2 T. brown sugar

Spray the entire crock pot with a non-stick spray. In a separate bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder, salt,

sugars, eggs and vanilla. Add the melted butter and half and half. Dump in blueberries and stir well. Pour into crock pot. Then, in another separate bowl, cut together the topping ingredients. Sprinkle topping on top of mixture already in crock pot and DO NOT MIX. Cook 4 hours on low or 2 hours on high.

Passover Puffs-- not done in a crock pot



Due to popular request, here is my recipe for Passover Puffs. These are great for making sandwiches. Yes they are made with matzah meal, but no—they don't taste like Passover food.

If you want to add some variety, try adding more or less sugar, depending if you are serving them with sweet or savory foods. Also, you can add cheese into them before cooking or seasonings to spice them up. I like them plain, with some cream cheese and jam.

Seriously, you can live on these for the next week. Enjoy!

1 c. boiling water

1/2 c. vegetable oil

1/2 t. salt

2 t. sugar

1 c. matzah meal

1/2 c. cake meal

4 eggs

Boil water, oil and salt. Add dry ingredients, remove from heat and mix. Add eggs, mix. Drop in big scoops (or use a muffin pan to make them pretty) onto greased cookie sheet. Bake at 425 degrees for 30 minutes and then 325 for 30 minutes.

Crock Pot Cranberry Pork Loin

Sometimes it's tough to figure out how to cook a large piece of meat— especially if you don't want it to taste, well... tough. I know some of my readers don't eat this "other white meat" so you can also try this recipe with a turkey tenderloin if you'd prefer.

This recipe makes me think of holidays. There is something very festive about using cranberries; these unique fruits are tangy and sweet and really can be complemented with an array of side dishes and other flavors. Try this dish at your next family gathering or for dinner tonight!

1-2 lb. pork loin

1/4 c. cranberry juice

1/2 c. black cherry preserves

1/4 c. dried cranberries

1/4 t. all spice

1/2 c. sugar

Place pork loin in crock pot and if you have it, use the trivet underneath. Mix together preserves, juice, allspice and sugar. Pour mixture over meat and then add cranberry juice to the pot. When you pour the juice, be careful not to rinse the seasonings and preserves off of the meat. Cook for 6 hours on low. If you want to use the juices as gravy, then remove meat and add 1 T. corn starch dissolved into 1/4 c. water to the remaining juices and cook until gravy thickens.

Crock Pot Tapioca Pudding

Growing up, my dad really liked tapioca pudding and I could never understand why he enjoyed eating eyeballs. They look gooey and slimy and smelled like playdough. I also remember seeing vats of it at Chinese buffet restaurants and was again reminded of things like eyeballs and fish eggs.

Then I discovered that with a little love, it could actually be a delicious treat. The addition of vanilla and cinnamon make this more of a dessert, but I wouldn't be opposed to eating it for breakfast. As an additional note—tapioca pearls are also a great way to thicken up desserts, stews and sauces, but use the small pearls in those instances.

Try serving this dish with vanilla wafers or a few little chocolate cookies that might be "thin" and "minty". If you eat it warm, you might also like it with some pound cake and fresh fruit.

4 cups milk

1/2 c. sugar

1/2 c. tapioca

2 eggs, lightly beaten

1 t. vanilla

1/2 t. cinnamon

pinch nutmeg

Mix everything together in the crock pot and then cook on low for 4 hours or on high for about 2 hours. Can be served warm or cold.