

Crock Pot Beef and Barley Stew



Here's your history lesson for today, folks... let's learn about barley. If you are a "meat and potatoes" kind of person, barley is a great item to add to your grocery list. Barley rations go all the way back to biblical times, I think, it's healthy, hearty and inexpensive; is one of the world's top harvested

grains; and here's a fun one— one of its main purposes is for producing beer and malted beverages.

Now that you've done your studies, let's prepare your eats! This stew is meaty and thick and satisfies the hungriest belly. It is a meal in itself, but I prefer a small bowl of it with a side salad— and a beer, so I can be consuming barley in multiple forms. ☐ This is a nice variation to the common beef stew.

On a nice fall day like today, your house will be filled with the warm smell of meat, vegetables and an easy dinner. Enjoy!

1 lb. beef stew meat chunks

1 c. baby carrots

4 stalks of celery, cut into chunks

1/2 medium onion, diced

3-4 cloves garlic, chopped

1 15 oz. can diced tomatoes, NOT drained

1 cup pearl barley

3 c. water

1 t. black pepper

1 t. salt

1 t. celery seed

Add all ingredients to the crock pot in this order. Give a little stir, just enough to promote mingling. Cook on low for 6-8 hours.

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!

Crock Pot Vegetarian Fiesta

After a great weekend away, it's nice to be back home to cook. But surprise!! Company for dinner tonight. I haven't had a chance to go to the grocery store yet, so I need to whip up something for dinner that is tasty and unique without needing a separate shopping list.

Here's one of my secrets- I always have tortillas in the refrigerator as a quick fix (think... chicken quesadillas, deli wraps, flatbread pizzas) and I also keep random cans of food in the pantry. Voila! Dinner is served. Seriously, it's just that easy. Try stocking your kitchen with some of these easy ingredients and next time you have last minute guests, you'll have a great meal to serve. Enjoy!

2 15 oz. cans of black beans, drained and rinsed

2 10 oz. cans of diced tomatoes with green chiles

1 15 oz. can corn kernels, drained

1 10 oz. can of enchilada sauce

1 lb. bag of frozen mixed pepper strips

1 t. cumin

1 t. dried oregano

1/2 t. black pepper

Pour all canned ingredients and seasonings into crock pot and stir together. Add frozen peppers and stir again. Cook on low for 3-4 hours. Use this as a filling for soft tortillas, serve it on white rice as an entree or on top of shredded lettuce as

a salad.

Crock Pot Noodle Kugel

This is one of my favorite foods from my experience with Jewish holidays. This casserole is sweet and dense with a wonderful warmth of cinnamon and vanilla. The noodles are soft and bound with the creamy egg filling. But my favorite taste is the plump raisins that swell with flavor and are a great contrast to the texture of the noodles.

I've made this dish many times in the oven, so it seemed like an easy transition to do it in the crock pot. Plus, it was so much easier to serve this dish hot as a buffet item when guests could just scoop it up still steaming. Plus— no one had to be embarrassed to have seconds when they could just go back to the crock pot for more!

1 lb. yolk-free broad egg noodles, cooked

5 eggs, beaten

16 oz. sour cream

16 oz. cottage cheese

1/2 c. sugar

1 t. cinnamon

1 T. vanilla

1 c. raisins

1 c. Special K cereal (crushed)

2 T. butter, melted

Mix all ingredients except noodles in crock pot until smooth. Fold noodles into mixture gently. Mix crushed cereal and melted butter in a separate bowl and then flake on top of casserole mixture. Cook on low for 4 hours. For last 15 minutes, position lid sideways so that air can escape during final moments of cooking.

Crock Pot Broccoli and Rice

This dish is so easy, so tasty and so complete that I started it while I drank my morning coffee and we ate it for lunch. You could use this decorated-vegetable-and-carbohydrate with pretty much any protein and it would be the perfect complement. Even my kids like it! Try this next time you want a simple side. Enjoy!

1 lb frozen broccoli spears

1 c. white rice, uncooked

1 can cream of mushroom soup

1 can-full of water

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

Put all ingredients in crock pot and stir. Make sure the rice is mixed into the water and soup and isn't just sitting on top of the broccoli spears. Cook on low for three hours.

Crock Pot Thai Chicken soup

One of my favorite new indulgences is Thai food. I started a few years ago with Pad Thai. It's like the thai version of lomein, which is really just a step above the college-grade ramen noodle. But it started to introduce me to new flavors. Then, I moved up and through a few of the curry dishes; I quickly learned my ridiculously low capabilities for spicy food. I like my thai dishes with either chicken, tofu or shrimp- I just think think that these proteins absorb the most flavor from everything else it's cooked in.

There are some particular seasonings for Thai food, though, and I just don't keep these things in my kitchen yet. So while I'd love to have lemongrass and keffir lime leaves abundantly available or even know where to buy some galangal, I'm replacing some of these flavors with some easier go-to foods that you can find at your regular grocery store.

My crock pot Thai chicken soup is an interpretation of a traditional Thai tom kha soup. It still has the coconut milk, chicken and mushrooms, but I use ginger instead of galangal and lime juice for the citrus twist. I also haven't broken down and bought fish sauce yet, so I just leave it out. Fish sauce's first impression is that it just tastes salty, so the broth really already fulfills that requirement for me.

I hope you enjoy the new flavors of this soup. If you want to make it more of a Thai dinner, try adding some white rice and veggies with curry sauce to make this a complete cultural meal!

3 boneless, skinless raw chicken breasts cut into strips

2 c. chicken broth

1 13.5 oz. can lite coconut milk

1 T. ginger root, peeled and minced

2 T. lime juice

6-8 mushrooms, cleaned and sliced

2 stalks celery, sliced

1 c. baby carrots

1 t. red chili pepper flakes

cilantro or basil leaves, sliced for garnish

Combine all ingredients in crock pot and cook on high for 4 hours. Serve with some green leaves sprinkled on top.

Crock Pot Vegetarian Lasagna

I love lasagna! Anytime you can combine everything into one dish and it hits pretty much every food group, then I'm a happy girl. But oven-baked lasagna takes way too much work... all the boiling and layering and smoothing and baking and spilling, then oven cleaning... I would rather just order lasagna from a nice little Italian restaurant than go through this whole charade.



This one-pot dinner is a great meat-free option that leaves you full and satisfied.

So after doing a little research, I've figured out that crock pot lasagna is very doable. Not only can you assemble it in the pot, but I am convinced that most of the cooking should take place in the pot, too. This dish is easy to cook, doesn't take more than an afternoon to finish and you can even freeze the leftovers for another night. That is, if there are any leftovers!

I hope you enjoy this take on one of my favorites. Enjoy!

1 12 oz. box of lasagna noodles, uncooked

1 15 oz. container ricotta cheese

2 c. shredded mozzarella cheese

1 24 oz. container chunky spaghetti sauce

2 zucchinis, sliced thick

2 c. fresh spinach leaves

1/2 c. fresh basil leaves

1 egg

2-3 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 t. black pepper

1 t. dried oregano

3/4 c. water

1/2 c. parmesan cheese

This recipe is best made in an oval-shaped crock pot; a round one will work, it just creates a very tall lasagna.

In a separate bowl, combine ricotta cheese, egg, garlic and seasonings. Pour 1 c. of spaghetti sauce into the pot and stir it around so it coats the bottom of the crock pot. Fill the sauce jar up with 1 c. water and shake it around– this watered down sauce helps the noodles soften more when cooking. Place first layer of 3-4 noodles in crock pot. Cover noodles with 1/2 of ricotta mixture. Lay zucchini slices on next, followed by another layer of 3-4 lasagna noodles. Add 1 c. spaghetti sauce and cover noodles with 1 c. shredded mozzarella cheese, spinach leaves, basil leaves and then the remaining ricotta mixture. Add final layer of noodles. Cover with remaining sauce and then sprinkle with mozzarella cheese and parmesan cheese. Cook on low for 3 hours.

Crock Pot Thai Chicken Wraps

Tonight is open house at my son's school and the timing makes dinner as a family tough. So, it is going to be date night instead– but eating out is expensive, so I'll feed the kids

early and then us parents can eat when we get home (and the kids are sleeping!). But since I'm not sure what time we'll get home from the school, I'm going to start the crock pot late this afternoon so that dinner is ready when we get back.

One of my favorite appetizers is those amazing sauced up thai chicken wraps that you can get at fancy Asian-inspired restaurants. The unfortunate part is that the lettuce is totally an illusion making you think this is a healthy choice. The typical sauce is usually full of really salty, sugary, high calorie ingredients that I totally don't want to indulge in tonight. So I've come up with a healthier way to enjoy this treat, using the crock pot to get the most out of all the flavors and then whipping up a quick sauce in a pan to coat the whole mixture.

Most restaurants serve this dish with iceberg lettuce because it is crisp, but you can also use leaves of romaine lettuce or even tortillas. I hope you get to enjoy this at your next date night at home, too!

2 stalks celery, chopped

2 carrots, chopped

1/2 onion, chopped

6 oz. mushrooms, sliced

3 cloves garlic

1 8.75 oz. can water chestnuts, chopped

2 10 oz. cans white chicken in water

sauce:

1/2 c. peanut butter

1/4 c. soy sauce

1/4 c. water

3 T. rice wine vinegar

2 packets of Splenda

Put all filling ingredients in the crock pot and cook on low for four hours. In a saucepan, cook all sauce ingredients over medium heat (yes, on the stove), until it reaches a smooth consistency. If it is too thick, add 1/4 c. water and continue stirring. Pour the sauce into the crock pot and stir the mixture well. Serve with chilled lettuce leaves.

Crock Pot Marsala Pears



Lately, I've been more interested in making crock pot desserts. I think it's the farthest thing from what grandma used to make— this amazing kitchen appliance is meant for more than just soup and meat! I have a couple pounds of fresh seckel pears. They are still firm and their skins are colorful and fragrant with just a few blemishes. Since we'll be cooking these down, I think it's best to use fruit when it's just a day or two ahead of being ripe.

Some of the recipes I've seen for seckel pears require the cook to peel the pear, but that's it. I have issues with this prep. First off— it's ridiculously difficult to stand pears up on the crock pot. Have you ever seen a flat-bottomed pear?!

Plus, it might make a nice presentation in it's original form, but then you have to worry about cutting around the tough middle and not eating any of the seeded parts. Why not just half it and use a melon baller to remove the part you don't want to eat?? Or you can be even lazier, like I am, and just slice the halves off just outside of the core so you don't even have to scoop it out. So there you go, that's my suggestion. Either way, it's a couple minutes more prep work, but it's just as good to eat with less hassle at the dinner table.

Marsala wine is great for cooking. It's full flavored and a little sweet. I opened a bottle to make chicken marsala one night and now it's been sitting on my shelf. It's not a wine I would drink from a glass, but it's great for cooking. So I think the combination with fresh fruit really makes mouth water. Plus, it's really sad to let the bottle gather dust between chicken marsala nights. If you don't have marsala, try another red wine and maybe add some raisins or craisins to the recipe to add a little sweetness.

Try these pears for pretty much any meal. They would be amazing next to some cinnamon oatmeal for breakfast, a nice snack with a side of vanilla greek yogurt or serve it for dessert after a steak dinner and top it with some dark chocolate shavings. However you discover it, I hope you like experimenting with this fresh fruit. Enjoy!

12 seckel pears, halved and scooped (see above note)

1/2 c. marsala wine

1 T. sugar

Place pears in the crock pot, pour wine in and sprinkle sugar. Stir it all around and cook on low for 2-3 hours. The pears should be soft enough to cut with the edge of a fork, but not mushy like apple sauce.

Crock Pot Curried Sweet Potatoes

This recipe was a huge hit last night! Even the kids liked it. It's flavorful and when all these flavors fuse together, it's an amazing combination. These are not your candied Thanksgiving yams by any degree. When the coconut milk and curry gets a chance to melt into the sweet potatoes, the sweet smokiness will definitely make everyone at your dinner table ask for seconds.

4-5 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed



1 can lite coconut milk

1 T. curry powder

2 T. honey

Put sweet potatoes in crock pot and then drizzle honey on top. Shake curry powder into pot and then pour coconut milk on top of everything. Mix together a couple times to make sure potatoes are coated in all ingredient. Cook on high for 2.5. hours or until sweet potatoes are soft.