

Crock Pot Beet Borscht

Dre's got nothing on me—my beets are fresh! Ha! Get it? See what I did there.



Beet borscht tastes great with a few boiled potatoes and a scoop of cold sour cream.

There is nothing that makes me think of the my family history more than a steaming hot bowl of neon pink soup. No, this isn't a serving of chemical warfare, it's a fresh and sweet, soothing bowl of beet borscht. My grandma still makes this and at most Jewish Deli's you can usually find it on the menu right next to corned beef, chopped liver and matzah balls. What can I say? My roots are authentic and so is my cuisine. Except grandma never made this dish in the crock pot!

Now if this was truly home cooking, I would use fresh beets, but I've found that the canned version works just as well and the pink juice adds a certain flavor feature as well. Grandma taught me to cut sliced beets into strips instead of buying the canned variety of matchsticks. Somehow the matchstick ones are too mushy. (According to grandma, of course.)

Authentically, I would hand slice some cabbage, but I love the fine style of angel hair cabbage that I can purchase at my

grocery store. It cooks up quicker and doesn't contrast the texture of the beets as much.



Keep a few of these items on hand in your pantry and you can have beet borscht anytime you want!

If you make this dish with fresh beets, just clean, peel and shred them before throwing them in the crock pot. The taste is very similar to this recipe, but the beautiful pink broth cannot be matched! It truly is extraordinary. But that pink color will most likely stain your cutting board. And your fingers. And your countertops, before you even realize the glow has been dripping!

This soup can be made vegetarian or meat-based. In fact, try cooking down beef bones or chicken bones to make your broth instead of using store bought. I know, I know... this meal is so "processed", but hey, it's a weeknight, and sometimes even the Crock Pot Queen needs a a quick meal to fix.

Give this a try and keep an open mind. Put on those Dre headphones and drop the beat. But not the beet. It will probably stain.

Crock Pot Beet Borscht

Serves 8

2 15 oz. cans of sliced beets (do not drain)

1/2 sweet onion, sliced thin

1 package finely sliced cabbage (approx. 6 cups)

2 bay leaves

2 cloves of garlic, chopped

1 32 oz. box vegetarian stock

8 redskin potatoes

8 T. sour cream

Slice the onion and put in the crock pot with the cabbage, bay leaves, and garlic cloves. Drain the cans of beets into the crock pot and then cut the sliced beets into strips. Add stock and cook on high for 3-4 hours. Clean and quarter the potatoes and bowl separately. To each serving of soup, add a few chunks of boiled potatoes and a dollop of sour cream. Borscht is also refreshingly delicious served cold.

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 refrigerator 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.

Crock Pot Spiked Pear Sauce

For years, I've been making my [crock pot spicy applesauce](#) to serve with my Chanukah latkes, but this year I wanted to try something new. But I like a little festiveness in my fruit sauce. Today's recipe is so easy and simple, but creates a smooth mouth feel and just enough twist to raise an eyebrow or two.

Try this on your latkes, but also serve it warm over vanilla ice cream or on a berry cobbler. It has cooked long enough to be tamed down for kids, too, but still keeps true to the spiked flavor. I'm quite certain my family will approve of this dish!

Crock Pot Spiked Pear Sauce

4 ripe bartlett pears, peeled, cored, and chopped into large chunks

1/3 c. Honey Jack Daniels (plus one shot to consume while cooking!)

Put ingredients in crock pot, on low, for 4 hours. After cooking, use immersion blender to puree into a sauce. Enjoy!

Crock pot chicken and rice soup



'Tis the season for festive holiday celebrations and impromptu trips to schools to pick up sick children. Let's be honest, this time of year seems to be more "flu-ish" than Jewish for us!

Good thing I had some premade broth in my freezer. You can use boxed soup broth for the recipe, just eliminate the salt edition.

My mom always put a whole tomato in chicken broth-based soup's to add a hearty flavor with a little sweetness.

Here's to a healthy and happy rest of December!

8 cups chicken broth

1 cup uncooked white rice

4 carrots, peeled and diced

3 parsnips, peeled and diced

4 stocks of celery, diced

1/2 yellow onion, diced

4 cloves of garlic, peeled

1 whole tomato with fork holes poked in it

Put all ingredients in crockpot and cook on low for 3 to 4 hours or until rice and veggies soft.

Black Friday

BLACK FRIDAY- The best savings on time are using your crockpot instead of your stove!



While many of you fans were out before the sun this morning, shopping for great deals on holiday gifts and personal

favorites, I hope you also started your crockpot before you left for the mall so that you had a hot, festive and delicious meal upon your return home.

Cyber Monday is also a great time to shop for that new crockpot online and get a gift for yourself!

I had a special gift arrive in the mail today. I ordered a few extra copies of Chile Pepper magazine which featured Dinner Is A Crock in their one pot wonder issue this December. if you haven't already, pick up a copy online, in stores or digitally. While I love the feature of my blog, there are some wonderful recipes from other cooks featured as well.

Thanksgiving Survival Guide

Happy Thanksgiving, fans! I thought about a long post about family and friends and how food brings us all together... but who has time for that?! Let's keep it simple. I'm all in for a good meal, but I need a good drink to start. Let's begin there...

ADULTS-ONLY Caramel Apple Cider

1/2 gallon apple cider
2 cups caramel flavored vodka

Heat on low and serve to every family member.

Then, here are some quick sides to add to your festivities:

Green bean
casserole: <http://dinnerisacrock.wpenginepowered.com/2010/02/24/green-bean-casserole/>

Creamy corn:
<http://dinnerisacrock.wpenginepowered.com/2010/04/26/crock-pot-creamy-corn/>

Spicy applesauce:
<http://dinnerisacrock.wpenginepowered.com/2010/11/22/crock-pot-spicy-applesauce/>

Stuffing
balls: <http://dinnerisacrock.wpenginepowered.com/2010/06/11/crock-pot-stuffing-balls/>

I've never made a turkey in a crock pot. But I have roasted a chicken, so if you only need to serve 2-4 people, pick a different bird and try this instead: <http://dinnerisacrock.wpenginepowered.com/2010/03/12/crock-pot-roasted-chicken/> This link also includes my curried chicken salad which is an excellent idea for your turkey leftovers, too!

Wishing you and yours a happy and festive celebration. Now pass me some of that apple cider!

We are Famous!



We are famous! Or at least my kids think. My oldest son asked me if I get to meet Guy Fieri. My youngest son told me I should start charging friends when they come over for dinner.

I am thrilled to tell you that Chile Pepper Magazine will be featuring Dinner Is A Crock in this month's issue! You can find a print copy or digital copy online from www.chilepepper.com.

Welcome to my new fans! Please peruse the recipe index and pick a few new recipes to try. My go-to favorites include crockpot vegetarian lasagna and my monthly do of crockpot caramelized onions.

With Thanksgiving quickly approaching, start thinking about what dishes you can cook in your crockpot and free up space in your oven for that bird! Try crockpot green bean casserole or crockpot spicy apple sauce as fabulous new side dishes.

New recipes coming soon! Stay tuned!

Crock Pot Spaghetti Squash



I was walking through the produce aisle this week and excited to see all of the fall produce slowly emerging as the weather starts to cool and the crock pot starts to heat. With squash of every size and variety piled up like presents under a tree, I started loading my cart

with butternut, acorn, and spaghetti squash. But the tipping tower of treasures presents a second issue— how do you prepare and cook these ridiculous looking vegetables? As with most foods that I don't want to fret about, I make them in my crock pot!

If you haven't ever experienced spaghetti squash, you are about to be delighted. I'm pretty sure it's the best diet food ever since it's low in calorie, gluten-free, dairy-free, paleo-friendly, vegan, vegetarian, nut-free, guilt-free, and packed with nutrients and flavor. But what intrigues me most about this cavern of goodness is the bizarre pasta like consistency of the meaty threads.

Here's the prep: waaaaaash the squaaaaaash. I love that you just sounded that out. Seriously though, this thing is going to sit in its entirety in your crock pot all day, let's not harbor fugitives like bugs or germs. Then take a sharp knife and stab the squash 5-6 times so that the heat and moisture

can seep in and out to cook the flesh. Yes, it's a vegetable, but I think you can use words like meaty and flesh to describe never-living creatures, too.

Put the 4 lb squash and 2 cups of water in your crock pot for 6 hours on low. When it's done, the squash will deflate a bit and be awkward to lift out. Watch out- it's HOT and full of juices. Let it cool a bit before you handle it. You will need to cut the spaghetti squash in half and scoop out the seeds inside (Throw the seeds away. This is not a pumpkin.)

Use a fork to shred the cooked pasta-like fresh from inside the squash. Once you have scraped it out, throw out the skins. Much like pasta, this is now a wonderful blank slate to begin preparing a delicious dish! Here are a couple ideas to choose from as far as fun flavors to add into your spaghetti squash:

- Add 1 tablespoon butter, 1 teaspoon minced garlic and 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese.
- Add 1 cup alfredo sauce, 1 lb. browned ground beef and a can of stewed mushrooms. Oh look- beef stroganoff!
- Top it with [crock pot chicken cacciatore](#) for a low-fat, low-carb hearty dinner. (Yes, this requires two crock pots.)
- Add a scoop of [crock pot caramelized onions](#) and some cubed mozzarella cheese. French onion spaghetti squash!

Trying a new vegetable dish is no longer a challenge or a disappointing dinner. Enjoy your local seasonal vegetables in these new and exciting ways.

Crock Pot Strawberry Jam

I cleaned out my refrigerator yesterday because I was certain there were a couple meals left to cook before I needed to go grocery shopping again. I realized that I had two lbs of strawberries that were ripe and ready... and starting to get a little soft.

I've been dabbling with the idea of learning to do canning, but either didn't have the supplies on hand or just wasn't ready to make the mess, so I haven't done jam yet.

I figured out, it's much easier just to cook it down into jam in the crock pot and then eat it up instead of going through the hassle of canning! My recipe was quick, easy and I bet you even have all the ingredients on hand.

Apples contain a natural pectin which works to thicken up the jam a bit, but this recipe will not give you a solid product. It's a great consistency to spread on toast, dribble on waffles or use to top ice cream or angel food cake.

2 lbs strawberries, cut the tops off first

3 cups white sugar

1 medium apple, cored, peeled and sliced

2 lemons, just the juice

Put all ingredients in the crock pot on high for three hours. Turn off; use a hand blender to puree the jam. Carefully, put into glass mason jars or plastic containers and let cool for one hour. Then, put lids on and store in refrigerator. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Hot and Sour soup

I had three reasons for creating crock pot hot and sour soup this week...

1. Chinese New Year was on Monday and I forgot to order takeout.
2. I've been trying to do at least one meatless meal each week.
3. Hot and sour soup is amazing for clearing up a stuffy nose and a winter cold!



As with all my soups, I like more “stuff” than “broth” so my hot and sour soup is more crowded than what you get at a Chinese restaurant, but I think you’ll like this as a full meal and not just an appetizer. Plus, it can be made completely vegetarian and I think it’s

gluten-free, so this is a great dish if you are cooking for people with food limitations.

If you didn’t get a chance to celebrate the Chinese New Year either, then whip up a quick batch of this hot and sour soup to start the year out like a fire-breathing dragon! (but you don’t need to make it that spicy if you don’t want!)

3 oz. shiitake mushrooms (I bought a 6 oz. jar of mushrooms in liquid and used half)

2 cups baby carrots, quartered

3 medium green onions, sliced

3 cups bok choy, chopped

4 c. low-sodium chicken broth

1/3 c. rice vinegar

1 T. soy sauce

1 t. ground ginger

1 t. sesame oil

2 t. sriracha sauce (Asian red pepper sauce, also sometimes called rooster sauce)

1 package extra-firm tofu, drained and cut into half-inch cubes

Put all ingredients EXCEPT TOFU into crock pot and stir into mixed. Cook on high for 3-4 hours (or until carrots are soft enough) then add cubed tofu and cook for one more hour.