

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 Corned beef and cabbage

(yes, this is a day early, but it's to motivate you to go out tonight and buy your supplies so you can make this amazing meal tomorrow)

Happy St. Patrick's Day! Many of us will pretend to have some Irish heritage this week and join in celebrations across the country. Whether you attend a parade or just go to work with a "Kiss me, I'm Irish!" button, you can have a festive tradition meal ready by the time you come home.

I did a little research online and found out that "corned beef and cabbage is the traditional meal enjoyed by many on St. Patrick's Day, but only half of it is truly Irish. Cabbage has long been a staple of the Irish diet, but it was traditionally served with Irish bacon, not corned beef. The corned beef was substituted for bacon by Irish immigrants to the Americas around the turn of the century who could not afford the real thing. They learned about the cheaper alternative from their Jewish neighbors." (from www.religionfacts.com)

However it became traditional, this is one of my favorite spring meals. Also, if you have leftover corned beef, try making corned beef hash and poached eggs this weekend for a second great meal from this easy crock pot recipe.

1 2-3 lb. corned beef

1/2 head cabbage, wedged

1 onion, wedged

4 red potatoes, quartered

1 c. baby carrots

2 bay leaves

1/2 t. celery seed

salt and pepper

Place potatoes, carrots and onion in bottom of crock pot. If you have a trivet, you can use that to make it easier to lift the corned beef out when it is done cooking. Sprinkle seasonings on meat. Lay corned beef on veggies. Add about 1/2 c. water. Cook on high for 4-6 hours. Add cabbage on top of meat and cook for another hour.

Enjoy your festivities (responsibly please)! ☐

Crock Pot Pomme de Tara

A friend of mine wants to use her crock pot more, but has an allergy to tomatoes. After doing a little research, I agreed with her— most crock pot recipes seem to have some sort of tomato or tomato-based product in them! It is an injustice that my friend should not be able to embrace easy crock pot cooking more often. So, my next few recipes will definitely not be red. And if it's just that you don't like tomatoes, these might just become some of your new favorites too.

This is an easy potato casserole that gets jazzed up by the cheese and chips. Since the french word for potato is "pomme de terre", I am honoring my friend Tara with this recipe for "Pomme de Tara". Enjoy! ☐

(Is there a recipe you'd like to see or an ingredient you'd like to avoid?? Click on my contact page and send me a note— I'm happy to post something just for YOU!)

6-8 potatoes, diced

1 onion, chopped

4 T. butter, melted

1 c. milk

1 c. sour cream

1-2 garlic cloves, chopped fine

1 t. parsley

salt and pepper

1 cup Cool Ranch Doritos– crunched up into little bitty pieces

1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Put potatoes and onions in the crockpot first. In a separate bowl, mix together melted butter, milk, sour cream and seasonings. Pour mixture over potatoes and onions and stir. Cook on low for 6 hours. Turn pot off and mix shredded cheese and Doritos into pot, but don't overstir– you don't want your soft potatoes to turn into mashed potatoes. Feel free to top this with crumbled bacon, chives or green onions. Makes a great side dish for breakfast, lunch or dinner!

Crock Pot Turkey Legs

Thanksgiving might just be one of my favorite holidays. There is something about preparing so many amazing dishes all day long and then sitting around the table with friends and family as we all ooh and ahhh about the foods. That feeling should

not just be reserved for one or two days a year! Therefore, I am offering up a delicious new way of preparing turkey and I suggest serving it with ONE of your favorite side dishes from Thanksgiving.

I think most people are fans of turkey's white meat, but I actually prefer the dark meat. It's juicier, has more flavor and has a much less likelihood of getting dried out when cooked. Also, turkey legs are really inexpensive to buy, compared to buying a whole bird, and still tastes amazing. When you make this recipe, the meat will literally fall off of the bone, it is soft and moist without tasting greasy or fatty.

Herbs de provence sounds more foreign than it tastes. I like easy seasonings that blend together in harmony. It's a sultry combination of thyme, rosemary, basil, tarragon and lavender flowers. It's great on meats or can add lots of flavor to soups and vegetable dishes.

My brother said this recipe is "caveman chic". There's no need to be savage, all the meat falls off the bones before serving it. But if you prefer to dive in without silverware, at least you have the lavender flowers in the herbs de provence to make you seem a little civilized.

3-4 turkey legs (about 2-2.5 lbs)

1 T. olive oil

2 T. herbs de provence

Coat crock pot with non-stick spray so the turkey skin doesn't stick to the pot too much. Place legs in pot and then brush lightly with olive oil. Shake herbs de provence all over turkey legs. Cook for 6 hours on low.

Crock Pot Ratatouille

In the Pixar movie by this name, the character Linguini says "Ratatouille. It's like a stew, right? Why do they call it that? If you're gonna name a food, you should give it a name that sounds delicious. Ratatouille doesn't sound delicious. It sounds like "rat" and "patootie." Rat-patootie, which does not sound delicious. " But with Remy's help, Linguini learned to cook, to enjoy it and to share great delicious dishes to others.

In our house, this movie is a favorite because it also teaches lots of great lessons. For example: we shouldn't judge others based on their families or where they came from, you should pursue your interests with passion and dedication, you shouldn't steal from others, in order to have great success we all need to work together and there will always be people to criticize, but even more people we can make happy.

This recipe is easy to make, maybe even for a movie night with your friends or family. Enjoy and remember "anyone can cook!"

1 medium eggplant, peeled and cubed
2-3 zucchini, sliced $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick
2-3 yellow squash, sliced $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick
1 medium onion, sliced into strips
2 cans diced tomatoes, NOT drained
2-3 cloves chopped garlic
Salt and pepper
Parmesan cheese

Sauté onion and garlic in a little bit of olive oil, just until onion is soft. Put eggplant, zucchini and squash in crockpot. Add onion and garlic on top, then both cans of diced

tomatoes. Add salt and pepper to your liking. Cook on high for 3-4 hours.

Serve on top of egg noodles. Top with a bit of fresh parmesan cheese. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Vegetarian Lentil Soup

There used to be this great Greek restaurant that I frequented that served lentil soup in a styrofoam cup. It was always hot and fresh and the lentils were soft without being mushy. I would frame my entire meal around saving room and money for the soup. This recipe mirrors the flavors and warmth of the soup but without a disposable cup. Unlike my vegetarian vegetable soup which is savory and chunky, this lentil soup is hearty and robust with even more amazing health benefits. Lentils are high in protein, iron, amino acids and when you add in the lycopine in the tomatoes and then all the vitamins, folic acid and antioxidants in the spinach... this soup is like a power boost for your whole system. Oh yeah, and it tastes amazing too.

Feel free to serve it in a real bowl and maybe with some crusty bread instead of saltines.

2 cups lentils

8 cups vegetable broth

1 onion, diced

3 stalks celery, diced

2 carrots, chopped
6 oz. fresh spinach, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 t. salt
1/2 t. pepper
1 t. oregano
1 t. cumin
2 bay leaves
1/4 t. cayenne pepper
1 14 oz. can diced tomatoes
1 T. red wine vinegar

Put everything in the crockpot and cook on low for 8 hours, but add the vegetable broth LAST. Most likely, you won't have room to pour all the liquid in yet. Once the vegetables have all cooked down, then add the rest of the liquid. My 5-qt crock pot is filled to the rim by the time everything is included.

This soup also freezes really well, so save half the pot for a meal another time.

Crock Pot Vegetarian

Vegetable Soup

I love these days that are halfway between winter and spring.

I'm pretty sure by mid-afternoon I'm going to be suffocating in whatever I decided to wear because I was in fear of getting cold when I got dressed in the morning. Yeah, I think it's one of those days. Any day that starts with a gray sky is perfect for a crockpot soup. It means dinner will be fresh and filling, but you didn't have to turn the oven on in the late afternoon and warm up the whole house to 350 degrees.

You can definitely add variety to this soup depending on what vegetables you like. The cabbage adds some sweetness to the soup and depth to the flavor, so if you aren't a huge fan, then cut it down to 1/4 head of cabbage, but I wouldn't remove it completely. If you are a fan of gumbo, try adding some fresh or frozen okra halfway through cooking so it doesn't get too gooey by the end of the day.

If you prefer things with a little intensity, use spicy v8 instead and 1/2 t. of cayenne pepper for the whole pot or top your individual bowl off with a few shakes of Tabasco.

1/2 small head of cabbage, chopped
1/2 sweet onion
2-3 red potatoes, peeled and diced
1 bag frozen mixed vegetables
2 stalks celery, chopped
2 cans petite diced tomatoes, no salt added
1 c. V8 juice
1 c. water
salt, pepper
2-3 bay leaves

Put everything in the crockpot on low for 8-10 hours or on high for 5-6 hours.

Remove bay leaves before serving.

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 mommies 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.

Crock Pot Cabbage Rolls

This is already in the pot for dinner tonight! It helps to cook the cabbage the night before so you don't scald your hands trying to peel off the perfect leaves.

1 head cabbage

1 lb ground meat (I'm pretty sure anything will work, I've used beef and turkey)

1/4 cup brown rice, uncooked

1 egg, beaten

1 onion, diced

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. pepper

1/3 cup cider vinegar

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 can tomato soup

1/2 cup Catalina dressing

1. Put cabbage in boiling water. Simmer for 5-10 minutes. Let cool completely before handling.

2. Mix meat, rice, egg, onion, salt and pepper.
3. In another bowl mix vinegar, sugar, soup and dressing.
4. Remove 12 large cabbage leaves from head and then chop remaining cabbage and put it in bottom of crock pot.
5. Put 2-4 T. of meat mixture in center of cabbage leave. Roll up, envelope style and place in crock pot, seam side down. (you can use toothpicks to hold the rolls together if you need to)
6. Pour tomato mixture over all of it.
7. Cover and cook on low for 8-10 hours.

(recipe is adapted from one on www.recipezaar.com)