

Crock Pot Cream of Mushroom Soup



Try different varieties of mushrooms in your soup to enhance the flavor!

Did you have a great weekend? Yeah, I met a real fungi.

Haha, fungi humor still cracks me up. Get it? Get it? Fun-guy?! Bwahhh ha ha ha. This recipe calls for at least three different kinds of mushrooms because I love the variety of texture. If you don't like mushrooms, don't make this recipe, make a different soup like [Crock Pot Creamy Tomato Soup](#) or [Crock Pot Cream of Celery and Leek Soup](#). This mushroom soup is earthy and pungent in all the right ways.

You can get mushrooms all year round, but I suggest you try different varieties each time you make this. For example... your standard button mushroom is a great basic, but play around with oysters, enochi, portabello, or bunapi. No, those are not made up words, they are varieties of mushrooms!

This recipe requires very little measuring, which might make some of you uncomfortable. But, rest assured, that you would have to work so very hard to mess this up. Don't over season the soup— it's better to add a little salt and pepper at the end instead of at the beginning.

I like my mushroom soup to be smooth and creamy so I use [a hand blender](#). If you like a more chunky soup, then try pulling 2 cups of the soup out and pureeing that, then add it back in. The soup will still feel smooth, but will retain the majority of chunks for bigger texture.

Try adding in other veggies for a more full flavor, if the mushroom intensity is too much for you. You can add chopped celery, green onions, chopped carrots, a can of green chiles or even some corn to adapt the flavor. I am making a simple version of this soup, but feel free to add more fun to your fungi as you experiment.

Crock Pot Cream of Mushroom Soup

Serves 6-8

4 cups mushrooms, cleaned, stems discarded, and caps cut into bite-sized pieces

32 oz. vegetable broth

2 cloves garlic, minced

4 sprigs fresh thyme (just the leaves)

1/4 sweet onion

2 cups milk

2 T. corn starch

Add all of the ingredients into the crock pot EXCEPT the milk and corn starch. Cook on low for 3-4 hours. With one hour left to cook, dissolve corn starch in the milk and then stir into

the soup. Puree the soup using [a hand blender](#) until texture is smooth. The soup should thicken in the last hour and then a bit more once served. Add salt and pepper as needed once cooking is complete.

Crock Pot Meatloaf



This family favorite is now even easier to make!

This recipe requires no lead up. You know it, you like it, you probably have had it a million times with just as many little variations. Let's go simple and make a flavorful loaf for dinner that will please the whole family. Meatloaf also reheats and freezes well, so if you happen to have leftovers (yeah right!) go ahead and have a meatloaf sandwich for lunch tomorrow.

One note: You can make this with a mix of meats, if you

prefer. Try half beef, half turkey or a mix of beef and bison. The directions stay the same, but the flavor and texture will change slightly.

Crock Pot Meatloaf

(serves 4-6)

1 pound 90/10 ground beef

1 egg

2 T. minced sweet onion

1/2 c. panko bread crumbs

1 T. brown sugar

1 T. ketchup (one good squirt!)

1/2 t. dried dill

1 t. fresh thyme leaves





Mix all ingredients together and form into a loaf shape. Put in crock pot or on trivet insert if you have one available. Cook on low for 4 hours.

(If you need a trivet for your crock pot, try this one: <http://amzn.to/1Iopz4m>)

Crock Pot Pork and Prunes



You will never think of prunes as old people food ever again once you taste this delicious pork!

A few years ago, my husband and I went to France to celebrate our anniversary. It was an amazing adventure and I am forever grateful to everyone that helped coordinate taking over our daily chaos so we could get away. We loved the wine and the micro-brews, but what we found most delectable was the food and how the regional influences changed the flavors depending where we were located. It shouldn't be too much of a surprise—from coast to coast, America certainly offers different flavors and flare when it comes to regional cooking, too!

So I'm going to create two dishes in my crock pot that mirror some of our favorite dinners that we experienced. Unfortunately, I can't run over to the *boulangerie* and grab a baguette for dinner and some croissants for breakfast, but I'm still pretty certain that I can recreate some of the tastes while building new memories as well.

France Revisited Recipe #1: Crock Pot Pork and Prunes

(you can also do this with a turkey tenderloin, if you prefer)



Take a quick trip to France
with this delightful dish!

As it turns out, I'm not sure that the combination of pork and prunes is really particular to France. I think that Italy, Scandinavia and other places in Europe also do this dish well and vary the ingredients just enough to claim it's origin!

The most challenging part of this recipe is preparing the pork. So let's go step-by-step through it. First of all, rinse of the tenderloin and pat it dry. This isn't a marbled cut of meat, most of the fat is attached to the outside, including a membrane that might appear cloudy. Remove the membrane (go on and grab it and pull it off) and cut off any excess fat.

In order to stuff the tenderloin, you need a hole through it. The easiest way I've found to do this is with an apple corer. Not kidding! Lay the tenderloin flat and cut my tenderloin in half. Skewer the meat with the apple corer and pull out the perfectly cylindrical meat tube. YES— this is totally gross, but totally easy. You might need to core the meat from both ends in order to have a complete tunnel. I couldn't get a picture of doing this, because both my hands were covered with raw meat and I couldn't grab my phone.

Next step... get over the fact that you just handled all that flesh. Moving on...

It seems like there isn't enough liquid in this recipe, but it's ok. The meat, the prunes and the onions all release enough liquid to keep moisture in the pot. If your crock pot tends to cook hot, then be cautious before going over 4 hours—you don't want the meat to dry out.

Bon appetit!

Crock Pot Pork with Prunes

Serves 4-6

2 lb. pork tenderloin

1/4 sweet onion, minced

12 pitted prunes, diced

1 T. Herbs de Provence



It just takes a few easy steps to create a tunnel in the pork tenderloin and prepare it for the prune stuffing.

Prep tenderloin by removing membrane and excess fat and then slicing a tunnel through the meat with an apple corer (see directions above). In a bowl, mix prunes, onions, and seasonings. Stuff mixture inside tenderloin. Place tenderloin

on rack inside crock pot and top meat with any remaining bits of the mixture. Cook on low for 4 hours or until meat is cooked through. Remove rack from crock pot and let meat stand for 5 minutes before slicing.

Voila! Enjoy!

Crock Pot Arugula Lentil Salad



Spring is here! Time for salads and fun.

Spring is here! No really, I mean it. OK, so the northeast might still have snow and the south is already sweating, but hey– it's April– and no one can deny that. We had friends over on Saturday night and all I wanted was an easy dinner of finger foods, fun, and friends. Let's be honest– the first

supplies I bought for dinner were the cold liquor and the marshmallows for smores. I started with an antipasto platter of olives, cheese, summer sausage, and stuffed grape leaves, because that pretty much took five minutes to make. But I wanted a light salad that would be filling and knew that I needed to sneak some protein in there.

So I decided to try lentils in the crock pot as a perfect spring salad topping. I've never made them before, so I did a little reading online. I learned that vegetarians love lentils (no surprise) but that I should never-ever-de-ever put salt in the water when I am cooking them (good to know!). I also read that you don't want lentils to get mushy, so I committed to cooking them on high instead of low.



Lentils are easy to cook and can be used in so many ways!

Lentils turned out to be ridiculously easy in the crock pot. First off, follow the directions about sifting through the lentils for stones or dirt or whatever hippies don't actually like to eat in their plant-based superfoods. Then, use a ratio of about one cup lentils to three cups water. You will have lots of excess water in the crockpot when the lentils are done, but you can easily use a slotted spoon to scoop the lentils out when they are done swimming.

I watched the crock pot a little more closely than I normally

do because I really didn't want the lentils to be overdone. I had set it for 4 hours on high, but at about 3 hours, they were done. Next time, I'll know to set it for 3 hours and I can go about my business. This is what having a relationship with your crock pot is all about, but sometimes the trust has to be earned.

That's it— perfect protein-packed superfood ready to top my spring salad.

So I started with arugula. Added the strained lentils. Topped it with a little bit of sweet pepper relish (you could use regular fresh red peppers if you prefer. For the dressing, I mixed together some fig balsamic vinegar with some herb-infused olive oil. If you have an olive oil store near you, it is totally worth getting these fun flavors and using them to make really easy dressings. Enjoy spring, people! Enjoy a fresh salad, a refreshing adult beverage, and some toasted marshmallows for dessert.

Crock Pot Arugula Lentil Salad

serves 6-8 as sides

2 c. dried lentils

4 cloves garlic, peeled

6 c. water

5 oz. baby arugula, rinsed and chilled

3 T. sweet

pepper relish or 1/2 red pepper, diced

dressing to taste

Put lentils, garlic and water in the crock pot for 3 hrs on high. Use a slotted spoon to remove all lentils. Top arugula with lentils, red pepper, and toss with dressing. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Cauliflower Curry



Crock Pot Cauliflower Curry
is a delicious side dish
that packs a lot of flavor!

Sometimes I just want a side dish with a little kick and not a lot of calories. I was raiding the pantry the other day and found a can of coconut milk that I didn't remember buying. Funny how that happens, right?! Like, who else would have bought this random item that I don't usually purchase? I must have had an intention for it, but the whim passed and I was still stuck with the can of curious origins.

Then, while trying to decide what to do with it, I debated the cauliflower I bought on a whim as well. I don't know about you, but I find so many recipes online right now reinventing the cauliflower and I go, that sounds good, let's try it! But then I pin 17 other things and forget where I started from. Maybe that's how I wound up with the coconut milk, too!

This dish is QUICK to put together— like five minutes— and is a great way to try a new ingredient or two. Warning- red pepper flakes can be spicier than you anticipate, especially

after they fester with the other flavors in the crockpot! Add them timidly the first time you make this dish. It's a side, not a fire!

Crock Pot Cauliflower Curry

Makes 6-8 side dish servings, depending on the side of your cauliflower

1 cauliflower, washed, core removed, chopped into bite-size pieces

1 red pepper, sliced or 6-8 multi-color small peppers, sliced

1 inch of ginger root, peeled and diced

1 yellow onion, sliced thing

3 cloves garlic, diced

1 can coconut milk

1 T. ground curry

1-2 t. red pepper flakes



With just a few ingredients you probably have on hand anyway, you can make this kickin' crock pot side dish!

Add all ingredients to crock pot and cook on low for 4 hours.
Cautious of the spice level until you try this for the first time!

Crock Pot Vegetarian Beef Stir Fry



Feed the meat-eaters in your family something new and tasty!

Ever wonder how to feed vegetarians but still make something that your family will eat? My boys are meat-eaters. I praise them for their love of fruits and veggies, too, but without meat, they would not survive. We are not a quinoa-black bean-lentil-tofu-kale-any other alternate to real protein eating crew. We're just not. I don't care how you make it, if it

doesn't look like meat, my boys won't touch it.



But, wait! What is this?! Beefless tips?! I was amused, possibly bewildered, and very intrigued. Let's try it in the crock pot! From what I could tell from the package, the end result would be very similar in consistency to meat. Since it didn't actually need to be

cooked through, this product worked great without taking a lot of time (DISCLAIMER: I do not work for Gardein Company, I just liked this product and wanted to share it with you.)

If this coming weekend is bringing guests of all shapes and sizes, and maybe even weird dietary restrictions or preferences, try this vegetarian dish and see if it's a crowd-pleaser for you, too!

Crock Pot Vegetarian Beef Stir Fry

Serves 6 people

4 cups kale, washed, stalks removed

8 oz sliced baby portabello mushrooms

1 bag Gardein Homestyle Beefless Tips

6 oz. can sliced water chestnuts

1/2 c. Soy Vey Veri Veri Teriyaki Sauce



Layer all of the ingredients in the order listed in the recipe. Hit start. It's just that easy!

Put all ingredients in crock pot in order and then pour Teriyaki sauce over everything. Cook on low for 3-4 hours. Serve over brown rice.

Crock Pot Asian Mushrooms



With a change of sauce and topping, these mushrooms went from the ground to being great!

Well fans, I told you I made variations to two of my recipes and I finally have a minute to share. The first variation was for [crock pot asian meatballs](#) and this was the side dish I made to go with it! I've been trying to do some Asian-inspired dinners that don't involve me picking up the phone and ordering fried, fried, sauced and steamed. I also wanted this dish to still be kid-friendly for picky eaters. So I took my favorite [crock pot sassy meatballs](#) and changed it's regional origin and then took my [crock pot garlic mushrooms](#) and added a different sauce and topping!

I learned from a Korean friend of mine that I can make a very basic sauce out of three ingredients, put it on almost anything, and it will taste awesome. And indeed, she was right! I'm also convinced that mushrooms can taste good covered in just about anything.

So I pretty much made these mushrooms according to the original recipe but without all of the seasonings. Add the sauce and sprinkles and be good to go!

Crock Pot Asian Mushrooms

serves 8 as sides

2 lbs white mushrooms, cleaned, stems removed, and quartered

1/4 lb. butter (one stick)

2 T. minced garlic

1 t. onion powder

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

Sauce:

1 T. sesame oil

1 T. soy sauce

1 clove minced garlic

Topping:

1 T. roasted sesame seeds

Put mushrooms in crock pot first, then all of the seasonings and garlic. Put the stick of butter on top as the last step and then put the lid on. No mixing is necessary. Do not add sauce yet. Cook on low for 5-6 hours. Combine the three sauce ingredients in a separate bowl. Remove the mushrooms using a slotted spoon and then toss in the sauce just before serving. If you wish, you can decorate the mushrooms with the roasted sesame seeds just before serving.

Crock Pot Asian Meatballs



Take your favorite foods to a new region with just a little variation!

Well fans, I told you I made variations to two of my recipes and I finally have a minute to share. I've been trying to do some Asian-inspired dinners that don't involve me picking up the phone and ordering fried, fried, sauced and steamed. I also wanted this dish to still be kid-friendly for picky eaters. So I took my favorite [crock pot sassy meatballs](#) and changed it's regional origin!

You can add many different vegetables to this dish, like the pea pods and shredded carrot that I chose, but also try water chestnuts, bamboo shoots, baby corn, or bean sprouts for even more interesting textures and authentic cuisine.

Start by making your own meatballs using 1 lb beef, 1 lb turkey, 2 eggs, 2 cloves minced garlic and 1/2 c. panko breadcrumbs. Do not bake them like you would with the sassy meatballs, you can actually cook the meatballs directly in the sauce for a softer finish to the meat.

Crock Pot Asian Meatballs

serves 6-8

2 lb. meatballs (see above recipe or buy frozen ones)

8 oz. grape jelly

1 jar Heinz chili sauce

1/2 lb. snow peas or sugar snap peas

1 c. shredded carrot (bagged or hand-grated)

1 T. soy sauce

1 T. roasted sesame seeds

Put all solids into the crockpot. Mix jelly, soy sauce and chili sauce together and then pour into crockpot. Cook 4-6 hours on low. Serve over noodles or rice and top with sesame seeds.

Crock Pot Apple Butter Pork



Fork-tender meat and an amazing balance of flavor will leave everyone in your family asking for seconds!

I won't lie, tonight's dinner was fantastic. The perfect mix of textures and flavors. It was easy to make and quick to serve and might become a top 10 favorite very soon. I wasn't even offended when my kids put ketchup on the meat, because hey- they were on their second servings and not complaining!

I'm a big fan of pork country ribs but I feel like it's a complete misnomer. When I think about ribs, I think about meat falling off of a bone. But there isn't a bone in country ribs, it's just sections of meat cut into the shape of ribs and contains a wonderful balance of meat and fat (it tends to cook off, so stop worrying). These are great for pulled pork sandwiches too, for future reference.

When you put all of these ingredients in the crock pot, you might worry about not seeing enough liquid- do not add any! The meat and the apples will ooze with flavor and moisture and it will all work out just fine. My apologies for using "ooze" to describe cooking, but when I think about cooking low and slow, it's totally an ooze, not a rush of flavor. Ooooooze.

This is a great recipe for any time of year, but especially great in the fall if you can get fresh, local apples and make your own apple butter. But there is no shame in buying it pre-made and ready to go... the outcome will be very similar!

Crock Pot Apple Butter Pork

Serves 8

2 lbs country ribs

2 gala apples, cut off the core and then into thick slices

1 sweet onion, cut into half and then into slices

1/2 cup chunky apple butter (chunky apple sauce will work too but the seasonings won't be as intense)

4 sprigs of fresh thyme

Put meat in the bottom of crock pot, then layer the rest of the flavors. Cook on high 3-4 hours. Meat will be fork-tender and apples and onions should be soft, maybe a little mushy, but not disintegrating. It's good if the leaves fall off the thyme- please do not ingest the twigs. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Garlic Mushrooms



It's quite possible that these little fungi will become your new favorite side dish. Consider yourself warned.

Snow Day #7. I've been using my crock pot for [breakfast](#), for [lunch](#), and for [dinner](#). Somehow the invasion of snow has worked up some serious appetites after playing outside. To feed my little monsters, I planned on making pasta last night (no, not in a crock pot... just the normal boil water and add pasta) but I wanted a nice side dish to go with it. I bought a huge container of mushrooms last week, but then forgot what I was going to make, so I decided that they would make the

perfect side dish for our pasta dinner.

Mushrooms are one of my favorite vegetables. They are all fine and good raw, dipped in ranch, or marinated. And they come in so many different varieties! Don't believe me? Take a trip to your favorite international grocer and see if you can even identify all of those little fungi. I like enoki in miso soup or baby portabellos in [beef stroganoff](#), but I used regular, white mushrooms in today's recipe. They are a pretty standard item for me to buy, since they are sturdy, take a long time to spoil, and can be added in so many different ways.

This dish is really easy to make, but be warned– you can fill the crock pot with mushrooms and six hours later, you will have about a quarter of a pot of food left! So plan for more than you think you want. They also work well added to spaghetti sauce or used as a layer in vegetable lasagna. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Garlic Mushrooms (serves 8 as sides)

2 lbs white mushrooms, cleaned, stems removed, and quartered

1/4 butter (one stick)

2 T. minced garlic

1 T. dried dill

1 t. onion powder

1/2 t. paprika

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

2 sprigs fresh thyme, just the leaves

parmesan cheese

Put mushrooms in crock pot first, then all of the seasonings and garlic. Put the stick of butter on top as the last step and then put the lid on. No mixing is necessary. Do not add parmesan cheese yet. Just don't. Cook on low for 5-6 hours. Remove the mushrooms using a slotted spoon and then decorate with grated or shredded parmesan cheese just before serving. If you wish, you can save the liquid in the crock pot for mushroom gravy.