

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.

Crock Pot Cowpea Soup



Most of you probably just read the title of this recipe and giggled. Yes, cowpea sounds a lot like cow pie. In fact, cow pee makes it seem even more funny. So if you haven't heard of a cowpea before, let me tell you a little about it. But seriously, you can stop giggling

now. Cowpeas are meaty little legumes that come in long pods. Once you pull the string off, you'll see the tightly packed peas pop out of the pod. They are sometimes classified as a black-eyed pea, but you can also get purple-eyed ones, they can be green, white or dark in color and they are hearty little nuggets to cook.

When you can get them fresh, you are good to go once they are out of the pod. If you get them dried, then you need to soak them in water overnight for about 8 hours and then rinse them a few times before you throw them in the pot.

Cowpeas are common in a lot of African recipes and provide excellent protein in many soups and rice dishes. These "beans" are also used in a lot of southern recipes in the USA. I even found a great recipe online for chow chow salsa that included canned black-eyed peas, but would be awesome with fresh cowpeas instead.

I thought that split pea soup sounded great to make this week—fresh cowpeas are readily available at my local farmers market right now and if I make it now and freeze it, it will make a

great meal later this fall when the weather cools off a bit. I decided not to go the traditional route and cook the soup with a ham hock, but to keep it vegetarian instead. If you'd like to, you can add diced cooked ham or turkey sausage after you puree the soup and then heat it for an additional hour to warm the meat. Either way, the soup is filling and satisfying and an easy meal when served with a crusty bread.

Kudos to you for trying something new. Cowpeas are a nice variation, especially if your family already likes peas and beans. Plus, if you can get them fresh, it's fun to pull the string and unleash the pea from the cow. Enjoy!

2 c. fresh cowpeas

1 medium onion, chopped

2-3 carrots, chopped

2 stalks celery, chopped

3 garlic cloves, chopped

2 parsnips, peeled and chopped

3 c. water

1 t. salt

1 t. black pepper

1 T. fresh parsley, chopped

Put all ingredients in the crock pot and cook on high for 4-6 hours. Using a hand blender, puree soup in the crock pot. If desired, add 1/2 lb. diced cooked ham or turkey sausage to the pot and heat for one additional hour on low.

Crock Pot Tortellini Soup



The title of this recipe is a lie. This isn't a soup. But it's not a stew and it's not just a pasta main course, so I don't know what else to call it. Technically, it does have broth in it, so therefore I qualify it as a soup. And since it's my blog, I get the right to label it however I want to! But this

is my disclaimer— there is nothing light weight or soupy about this dish. It is delicious and easy and full of flavor and takes just a few ingredients and a few minutes to make a whole meal. BUT— all of those details are way too much to put in the title, so I just call it tortellini soup. Enjoy!

1 28 oz. can of diced tomatoes (do not drain)

1 brick of frozen chopped spinach (no need to thaw, just dump it in frozen)

3 cloves garlic, minced

2 cups chicken broth

1/2 small onion, chopped

2 12-oz. packages of frozen cheese tortellini

Parmesan cheese

Put all ingredients EXCEPT tortellini in the crock pot. Cook on high for 3 hours. Add frozen tortellini to the pot, stir it

around and cook on high for one more hour. Top with a little Parmesan cheese when served.

Sarah's Vegetable Chili

I love when my friends and fans share their recipes... everyone loves a good crock pot dish that is worthy of sharing! So from one crock pot fanatic to another, here is Sarah's recipe for vegetable chili. It sounds like a great way to use fresh produce and also make a vegetarian dish that will fill everyones' bellies with happiness. I especially like her tools of measurement. Enjoy!

Chop one metric crap-ton (that's 1 HUGE zucchini, 3 small bell peppers, 2 big handfuls of green and wax beans and 2 ears of corn, hulled) to bite-sized pieces and drop into crock pot. Add 3 (15 oz) cans of beans (I used pinto, kidney and dark kidney). Stir to combine.

Separately, combine 1 (8oz) can tomato sauce, 1 (6 oz) can tomato paste, 4 cloves minced garlic, 4 T chili powder, 1 T dried mustard powder, 1 t oregano and 1 t ground cumin. Plop over veggies.

Add 1 box (4 C) vegetable stock. (I like wetter chilis, but you can use less if you prefer a chunkier chili). Stir to combine and coat all the veggies with the chili goodness.

Pop on low for I think mine was on for about 10 hours, so I'll go with the 8-10 hours on low. At this point, you can add cooked elbow noodles, sour cream, cheese, fresh onion...whatever you like.

I'm thinking carrots would sweeten it up a bit if that's what you like. OOH! I bet barley would be good too...Lookie at me, cooking without a complete recipe. My sister would be so proud! ☐ Next recipe will be filled with "a pinch of" and "a dash of" and "half an eggshell of"..."

Crock Pot Chicken Cacciatore



Happy birthday to my husband. He is an amazing man, father, lover and friend. And he loves my cooking. So for tonight, I wanted to make him a nice dinner. But of course, I still have the kids to take care of today, a house to clean before company and a dog that is begging to go out, so my options

for fine dining were a little limited. I decided to start a crock pot of food at lunchtime instead of at breakfast—our dinner will be done right as the kids are going to bed... so we can eat a meal as adults and maybe even partake in a glass of wine.

I had totally planned on doing chicken fajitas for dinner tonight or some sort of hearty "man" food, but my hubby went out with his coworkers for lunch at a Mexican restaurant, so I needed to reroute my dinner plans. Since I already had the chicken, I decided to make chicken cacciatore (pronounced catch-ahh-toe-ree) instead. It's robust and filling, but an easy one pot meal.

Cacciatore is usually served over a thin pasta like angel hair, but it can also be served over rice, if you prefer. I like to top mine with grated Parmesan cheese instead of putting the cheese in when it's cooking. You can also add other vegetables if you'd like— many cacciatore recipes add mushrooms and/or fresh basil leaves.

You don't need a celebration to dine on this great chicken dish. Enjoy!

4 frozen boneless, skinless chicken breasts

1 small onion, sliced thin

1 green pepper, sliced thin

1/2 red pepper, sliced thin

1/2 yellow pepper, sliced thin

1 medium zucchini, sliced thin

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 28 oz. can petite diced tomatoes

1 c. spaghetti sauce

1 T. parsley flakes

1 t. basil flakes

1 t. oregano flakes

1/2 t. celery seed

1/2 t. black pepper

1/2 t. salt

Combine vegetables in crock pot, top with all seasonings and stir together. Pour in tomatoes and sauce and stir again.

Place frozen chicken breasts on top of mixture. Cook on high for 4-6 hours. Serve over thin pasta or rice.

Crock Pot Cabbage and Onions



My family has requested perogies for dinner tonight and as much as I'd like to try to make them homemade, that just isn't going to happen. So I figured if our main dish at dinner is from a frozen blue box, then our side dishes should be fresh and flavorful.

Perogies are an amazing Polish entree that can have a variety of fillings inside. I remember a booth at the West Side Market in Cleveland, Ohio, that offered dozens of options— meat-filled, cheese, fruit, dessert, the list just kept on going. I'm making a sauteed cabbage and onion recipe in the crock pot today and the taste will really go nicely with my smooth, simple potato and noodle pockets. But someday, I'd love to go back to that booth in Cleveland and stock up on some crazy combinations instead.

This side dish would go great with almost any meat. The salt helps the cabbage break down and the wine and sugar really add to the natural sweetness of the onion. If you'd like a different color for presentation, try swapping julienned carrots for the red cabbage instead. I like the red cabbage because it gives the onions a really nice translucent purple color. Enjoy!

1 small head cabbage, sliced thin

1 medium sweet onion, sliced thin

1 c. shredded red cabbage

1/2 c. white wine

1 t. salt

1 t. celery seed

1 T. sugar

Put everything in the crock pot and stir together. Cook on low for 4 hours.