

Crock Pot Dulce de Leche



I'm pretty sure this Crock Pot Dulce de Leche would be good on just about anything!

This is the easiest dessert I've ever made. And while this recipe is not new or even really my own creation, I want to share it with you because of WHY I made it, and not just the HOW.

Here's a little story about my family. My youngest son has some crazy food allergies and while he is awesome and outgoing and resilient, he almost always has to miss out on desserts like cake at friends' birthday parties, free cone day at the local ice cream parlor, treats at school and after holiday services, and always has a heavy sigh when a waiter or waitress says, "would you like to see the dessert menu tonight?"

So for my sweet boy, I started learning to cook desserts. I don't like to bake, but there's something to be said about

life being short, so eat dessert first. I bought an [ice cream maker](#) that attaches to my stand up mixer and learned how to make a basic vanilla and then jazz it up with fruit. I learned how to make a [buttermilk pound cake](#) that is an easy crowd-pleaser. I found [chocolate chunks](#) that are good enough to eat alone.

But this crock pot dulce de leche recipe is life-changing. It is simple and sweet and I plan on making it way more often than I probably should! DISCLAIMER: THIS STUFF IS HIGHLY ADDICTIVE~ I want to put it in everything. My coffee. My pound cake. Drizzled on a waffle. Scooped onto ice cream. I plan on making teacher gifts with this stuff, holiday cookie exchange treats, and by mid-summer, I'll probably figure out how to make a pretty delicious dulce de leche martini (for me, not my son!).

I hope someday my kids appreciate the lengths I went to in order to provide them the opportunity to eat well. I like to tell them that I've ruined them for marriage by cooking every night and that their future spouses will hate me for focusing so much on the importance of the family dinner. But I won't apologize for it.



With just one ingredient, dessert is almost ready!

Crock Pot Dulce de Leche

servings: unknown (how much of this is too much?!)

2 14 oz cans sweetened condensed milk

water

Pour sweetened condensed milk into mason jars that will fit in your crock pot. Put lids and rings on tightly, then place in crock pot. Fill crock pot with enough water to cover lids entirely. Cook on low for 10 hours. The ingredient will turn from white to a beautiful caramel color. Turn crock pot off and let cool before removing cans to prevent burning your fingers! Mason jars will be shelf stable, but keep in refrigerator once you open it.

Crock Pot Coconut Butternut Squash



This is a great easy side dish that goes with everything! And it only takes two ingredients to make it.

Are you ever in need of a quick and easy side dish? This vegetarian option only takes TWO INGREDIENTS and cooks on low for about four hours. It also goes with just about anything, so there's no need to amp it up with crazy flavor— just dump it in an hit start.

The prep work for this dish is less than five minutes if you start with a whole squash— or about 30 seconds if you buy it already prepped. Now I'm a big fan of doing things yourself... I buy whole mushrooms, not the sliced ones, because I don't like the brown edges. I buy the pineapple already cored because otherwise it looks like a porcupine and I don't want to get pricked. And let's not even move to the meat department and the ease and efficiency of getting chicken that is already boneless and skinless!

But I digress. My apologies. Back to making things easy— I often buy butternut squash that's already been prepped. It's fresh and easy and pure in its raw state; it just has the seeds and skins removed which is actually sort of a difficult

task to accomplish. You can try [something like this](#) to peel it, but it's a challenging task, especially on a Monday! If you want to prep it yourself, that's fine... the measurements are still the same. Plus, with only two ingredients, you don't really to be too precise.

Crock Pot Coconut Butternut Squash

Serves 6 (as side dishes)

2 lbs. butternut squash, peeled and seeds removed, then cut into chunks

1 13.5 oz can coconut milk (light or regular is fine)

Put both ingredients in the crock pot, cook on low for 4 hours. That's it!

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? Funguy?! 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 Pumpkin Pie Applesauce



Pumpkins are not just for fall, make squash of all varieties part of your diet all year round!

Okay fans, it's April and I'm pretty sure we are all just a bit intimidated by summer swimsuit season being just around the corner. But just in case you're still holding onto those ideals of a perfect bikini body– or at least an ounce of confidence when you are poolside sipping on an adult beverage and reading a trashy magazine– I'm offering up this recipe.

I've had requests for more crockpot desserts and this one is a healthy, low-calorie version of a cross between pumpkin pie and apple pie. It will delight your sweet tooth just like two slices of pie, but to your diet– it's two servings of fruit instead.

I suggest serving this dish warm with a hearty scoop of salted caramel ice cream or with honey vanilla greek yogurt.

Crock Pot Pumpkin Pie Applesauce

serves 8-12

8 apples, peeled, cored and cubed

1/2 c. Orange juice

1 t. Cinnamon

1/2 t. Nutmeg

1/2 t. Allspice

1/4 c. Maple syrup

15 oz. can pumpkin purée

Add all ingredients to crock pot, stir and cook on high for 3-4 hours.

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 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.

Crock Pot Cream of Celery and Leek Soup



Crock Pot Celery and Leek
Soup

Most weeks, I have a game plan for all of our meals and a grocery list to organize my trip. I know which nights will be crockpot meals, which nights will be leftovers, and I even anticipate which nights I'll probably be too tired to cook!

But I started this week a day too late. I didn't have my grocery list set and I wasn't quite sure what was for dinner, so I opened the fridge and played a little Food Network-style game show called, "what the hell can I cook with these three ingredients?"

This is part of the amazement of crockpot cooking. With the right balance of seasonings and time, dinner can be a full meal without a lot of struggle.

Tonight's cream of celery and leek soup turned out beautifully. Some of my Facebook followers have been asking

for easy soups that are low calorie, too. This dish is very low carb and adding the last step really thickens it up to make it hearty. I even used 1% milk and it still tastes rich and creamy.

As long as you keep basic ingredients in your pantry and an open mind for culinary adventure, you can make delicious dishes without needing unusual ingredients. I'll still be going to the grocery store tomorrow, though!

Crock Pot Cream of Celery and Leek Soup

3 Bunches of celery hearts, sliced (about 8-10 cups)

1 lb frozen sliced leeks (or fresh if you can find them)

32 oz Chicken or vegetable broth

14 oz Can sweet corn, cream style

3 Cloves garlic, whole

1 t. Dried dill

1/4 t. Nutmeg

2 Bay leaves

1 t. Salt

1 t. Black pepper

2 T. Corn starch

2 Cups cold milk

Add everything except the last two ingredients to your crock pot. Cook on high for 3-4 hours or until all vegetables are soft. Remove bay leaves. Use immersion blender and purée soup. Dissolve the cornstarch in the cold milk and then add to crock

pot. Continue cooking one more hour on high so soup can thicken.