

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 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.

Crock Pot Caramelized Onions

I can't believe I haven't published this recipe for you yet! I make this once a month and then use it in other dishes. This is so easy and tasty and lasts for up to a month in the refrigerator— unless you are like me and use it all up first! Three pounds of onions fits in a one quart plastic container when cooked. Make sure the lid shuts air tight (tupperware, rubbermaid, gladware, mason jars, etc.).

Suggested uses for caramelized onions: put a scoop in any dish that you usually would use fresh chopped onions, like meatloaf, hamburgers or potato soup) or make it into super easy french onion soup— put a scoop in a bowl, cover with beef broth. Then put a crostini on top and some cheese and broil until cheese is melted. Seriously— french onion soup in five minutes or less!

You will save so much time if you take 8 hours and make this in advance. Enjoy the extra time and the extra flavor!

3 lb. yellow onions, sliced 1/4 inch thick

1 stick butter

Put onion slices into the crock pot. Put one stick butter on top. Cook on low for 7-8 hours. Cool. Store in airtight container in the refrigerator for up to one month.

Crock Pot Parsnip and Potato Soup

I'm totally enjoying soups this week and I hope you are getting a chance to enjoy some of these recipes too. I love it when I can make an entire meal in ONE pot and feed the whole family. This soup is a variation on my crock pot potato soup recipe (search for it in the recipe index) and adds in the unique sweetness of parsnips and carrots and sweet onions.

Even though it's almost spring, we still need to survive on the rest of winter's vegetables. If you can already grow things in your garden or windowsill, try adding fresh herbs like flat parsley, dill or chives to your soup when it is done cooking. I think you'll find the promise of spring in the soothing warmth of this chowder. Enjoy!

4 medium potatoes, peeled and diced

3 medium parsnips, peeled and diced

3 medium carrots, peeled and diced

2 stalks celery, diced

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 medium sweet onion, chopped

3 c. water

1 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

1 t. celery seed

1 c. milk

1 T. corn starch

1 can cream-style corn

Put all vegetables and seasonings in crock pot, cover with water. Cook on high for 4 hours. When vegetables are all soft, dissolve corn starch in milk and then add to crock pot. Add cream-style corn and mix ingredients together. Cook on low one more hour. Use an immersion blender and puree the soup until thick and creamy. Serve with fresh parsley, dill or chives on top.

Crock Pot Sweet Potato and Corn Chowder

This recipe comes from my friend I.H.K. and she is an amazing cook. This soup is thick and chunky and a whole meal in one bowl. She recommends serving it with tortilla chips or corn bread. Using an immersion blender can really change a soup from drab to fab by altering the consistency to be smooth and creamy instead of watery.

Since this recipe takes 8 hours on low, it's a great one to start before you leave for work in the morning and then come home to a beautiful dinner. Take a chance on this vegetarian

chowder and enjoy!

2-3 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed (about 1/2 inch)

1 medium onion, chopped

1 can whole-kernel corn (15-16 oz.), drained

1 can creamed corn

1 teaspoon salt

fresh ground black pepper, to taste

2 cups broth (I use the vegetarian "chicken" flavor)

2 cups half-and-half or whole milk (depending on how virtuous you want to be)

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 teaspoon smoked sweet or hot paprika (optional)

1 cup of shredded cheddar cheese

Put first set of ingredients in crock pot and cook for about 8 hours on low or for 4 hours on high. Once the sweet potatoes are tender, stir everything together. Use an immersion blender to break up the ingredients as much as you want—I like my chowder chunky, but breaking up some of the sweet potatoes and corn makes the soup thicker and more luxurious. When only 1 hour of cooking time is left (if the slow cooker has been on high, turn down to low) ADD: half and half or milk, butter, paprika and cheddar cheese.

Purple Sweet Potato Biscuits

Happy New Year, friends and fans!

So to be perfectly honest, I haven't done a lot of cooking since January 1. We've relished in some easy dinner like grilled cheese and tomato soup, grilled chicken with steamed

veggies and even ordering in Chinese food. But yesterday I tried a little baking and the result turned out so funny, I thought I would share.

I recently bought some organic veggies, including purple sweet potatoes. These potatoes are the same size and shape as regular sweet potatoes, but the insides are a vibrant purple (think the color of Barney or pansies!!) When I roasted the purple sweet potatoes, they were beautiful, but when I used them in this biscuit recipe, they turned out to be a purplish/blueish/greenish color instead! We were all entertained and they were really funny to see. But the taste and light, fluffy texture was great.



So here's the recipe for you to try. This is NOT my recipe. It's from www.foodnetwork.com with the original recipe provided by "Mama Dip", whoever that is. You can use regular sweet potatoes if that is what you can find, but I assure you that the purple variety is much more entertaining. Enjoy!

I will work on new crock pot recipes next week, I promise. ☐



2 cups cooked, mashed sweet potatoes (skins removed)

1 stick butter, melted

1 1/4 c. milk

4 cups self-rising flour

3 T. sugar

pinch of baking soda

Mix together the sweet potatoes, butter and milk until well blended. Stir in the flour, baking soda and sugar. Shape the dough into a ball and knead about 10 times on a well-floured board. Roll the dough out 1-inch thick and cut with a biscuit cutter. Bake in a greased baking pan in a 400-degree oven for 15-20 minutes or until brown on top.

((if you don't have self-rising flour you can substitute with all purpose flour and a few more ingredients and the result will be the same. 1 c. self-rising flour= 1 c. all-purpose flour+ 1 1/2 t. baking powder+ 1/2 t. salt))

Yields: 15 biscuits

Crock Pot Spicy Applesauce

Ok fans, let me put it this way... my dad dubbed this "ass-kickin' applesauce" and he's a respectable man. It's spicy and tangy and might tingle your tongue a little (especially if you use the full 1/2 t. of cayenne pepper); but this dish is also flavorful in ways that normal applesauce or apple butter just does not compare.

Here are my top three FAVORITE ways to enjoy this spicy applesauce:

Thanksgiving– leftover turkey sandwich on wheat bread– use this applesauce instead of mayonnaise to rock your taste buds to a happy holiday tune.

Chanukah– one potato latke+ one tablespoon cold sour cream + one scoop spicy applesauce= a celebration in your mouth.

Dessert– serve this spicy applesauce warm on top of a scoop of french vanilla ice cream for a hot and sweet treat.

I definitely recommend adding this to your holiday table over the next few weeks. Enjoy and happy holidays!

8 medium apples (any red, crisp variety) peeled, cored and cut into chunks

1/2 c. rum

1 t. cinnamon

1/2 t. black pepper

1/4 t. (OR UP TO 1/2 t.) cayenne pepper

1 can jellied cranberry sauce

Put apples in first, then seasonings, then rum. Stir well. Cook on high 3-4 hours. Add cranberry sauce and then use a hand blender to puree the applesauce. Cook on low one more hour. Enjoy as a side or as a spread or topping.

[Crock Pot Escalloped Apples](#)



This recipe is the direct result of two completely different factors=

1. we've been getting great fall apples and need to use some up, especially the ones with bruises

2. it's almost the holiday season and I'm trying to find lower calories, but equally delicious dishes to serve up as dessert

This recipe is best served warm with a scoop of either vanilla ice cream or just a dollop of whipped cream. It tastes like the inside of a warm apple pie, but barely has more calories than a cup of applesauce. It's soothing and comforting to the whole body and there is no reason to save this dish for dessert— try it for breakfast with your oatmeal, as a side to lunch or dinner or as a snack at any point of the day!

Unlike applesauce, this dish should be made with large chunks of apples. As they cook down, the apples might fall apart a little bit, but that will help the juices flow. Do not overcook this recipe or you will wind up with apple butter.

8 medium apples, peeled and cored and cut into large chunks

2 T. salted butter

1/2 c. brown sugar

1 t. cinnamon

pinch of nutmeg

1/2 t. black pepper

1 T. vanilla extract

1/4 c. cold water

1 t. corn starch

Put apples in the crock pot first, then sprinkle with brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, black pepper and drizzle with vanilla. Put butter on top of mixture, it will melt as it heats. Cook on low for 4 hours or until apples are softened, but still firm. Dissolve corn starch in water and then pour over apple mixture and stir. Turn crock pot off and let sauce thicken until it gets syrupy and easily coats the apple chunks. Serve warm.

(Makes 8 servings)

Crock Pot Acorn Squash

As the seasons change so does the selection of produce. I love summer for its melon and berries, but fall is such a refreshing reminder of patience. Have you ever tried to grow acorn squash? You plant it and then wait and wait and wait. Two summers ago, I lost an entire crop to shield bugs. The summer before that, my summer pole beans took over and the acorn squash never got the space to grow. The tough part about fall produce is encouraging it to survive the summer.

This year, I didn't plant any of my own, but the local farmer's market is just started to offer beautiful varieties of squash, so I picked up an acorn, a butternut and a spaghetti squash and I am happy to have found fall in these forms. Tonight I made the acorn squash and baked it with a

nice complement of baby carrots. This is a great side dish that is easy to make with very few ingredients. Enjoy!

1 acorn squash, cut in half and seeds removed

1 cup baby carrots

2 T. butter

2/3 c. water

Place acorn squash halves in the crock pot, facing up. Put 1 T. butter in each half, then 1/2 c. carrots. Pour the water in the crock pot, but not on or in the acorn squash. Cook on high for three hours.

Crock Pot Vegetable Soup For Men



I am fortunate to have a husband that loves my cooking and loves to eat. He tries everything I make and is very agreeable about most of it. But today, I had the privilege of watching my husband cook his first crock pot meal. And it turned out great!

Today's soup includes a lot of produce, but unlike my normal vegetarian vegetable soup which has small bits of lots of vegetables, my hubby's recipe includes chunkier cuts of vegetables and not as much variety. The real kicker of this

soup is the topping– add a few jalapeno peppers and you’ve got a treat to eat without any meat! ☐

I definitely encourage you to offer the crock pot up for family cooking adventures. It’s great to take with you on road trips to save money instead of eating out. It’s a great way to teach kids about cooking because there’s less risk of burning food or fingers. It’s also a great way to add healthier meals into your busy lives.

So kudos to my husband for coming up with this great recipe. Maybe he’ll do the dishes, too. Enjoy!

2 28 oz cans diced tomatoes

1 15 oz. can sweet kernel corn, drained

1 zucchini, chopped

4 stalks celery, cleaned and chopped

1 medium onion, diced

2 medium potatoes, skins left on and diced

2-3 cloves garlic, chopped

1 t. celery seed

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

1 T. dried parsley

TOPPING: jar of jalapeno pepper slices

Add all ingredients (except jalapeno slices) to pot and stir. Cook on high for 4 hours. When serving, add a few chilled jalapeno pepper slices straight from the jar, to each bowl. If your man likes it hotter, try a few shakes of Tabasco sauce, too!