

Crock Pot Vegetarian Fiesta

After a great weekend away, it's nice to be back home to cook. But surprise!! Company for dinner tonight. I haven't had a chance to go to the grocery store yet, so I need to whip up something for dinner that is tasty and unique without needing a separate shopping list.

Here's one of my secrets- I always have tortillas in the refrigerator as a quick fix (think... chicken quesadillas, deli wraps, flatbread pizzas) and I also keep random cans of food in the pantry. Voila! Dinner is served. Seriously, it's just that easy. Try stocking your kitchen with some of these easy ingredients and next time you have last minute guests, you'll have a great meal to serve. Enjoy!

2 15 oz. cans of black beans, drained and rinsed

2 10 oz. cans of diced tomatoes with green chiles

1 15 oz. can corn kernels, drained

1 10 oz. can of enchilada sauce

1 lb. bag of frozen mixed pepper strips

1 t. cumin

1 t. dried oregano

1/2 t. black pepper

Pour all canned ingredients and seasonings into crock pot and stir together. Add frozen peppers and stir again. Cook on low for 3-4 hours. Use this as a filling for soft tortillas, serve it on white rice as an entree or on top of shredded lettuce as a salad.

Crock Pot Broccoli and Rice

This dish is so easy, so tasty and so complete that I started it while I drank my morning coffee and we ate it for lunch. You could use this decorated-vegetable-and-carbohydrate with pretty much any protein and it would be the perfect complement. Even my kids like it! Try this next time you want a simple side. Enjoy!

1 lb frozen broccoli spears

1 c. white rice, uncooked

1 can cream of mushroom soup

1 can-full of water

1/2 t. salt

1/2 t. black pepper

Put all ingredients in crock pot and stir. Make sure the rice is mixed into the water and soup and isn't just sitting on top of the broccoli spears. Cook on low for three hours.

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

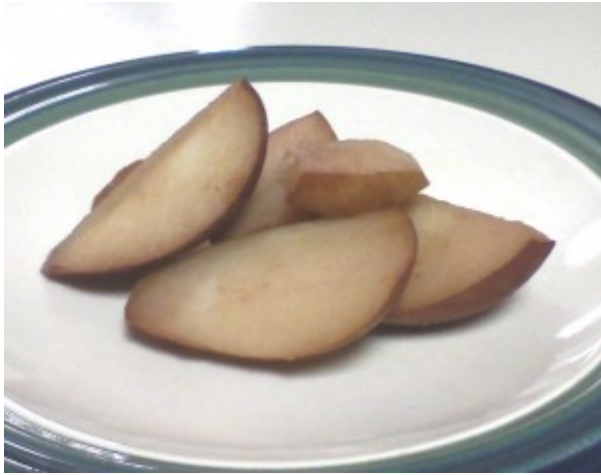
3/4 c. water

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 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



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 Peach Cobbler

The only thing better than a local farmer's market is a neighbor with an amazing garden and fruit trees. I had the pleasure of pillaging the peach trees yesterday and came home with about two dozen little peaches, ripe and ready to be enjoyed. They were sweet and juicy, broke easily off the pit and cooked down perfectly into my peach cobbler. I'm not sure what makes me happier— the warm cobbler with it's sticky sweetness stuck to my spoon... or the fact that I can walk next door, fill my basket and make another pot full tomorrow.

I like to keep the flavor of my cobbler simple. The peaches are already so sweet, I really just want to be able to cook them down a little. And I like the oatmeal topping, it makes me think of a cookie up on top. This recipe definitely craves a big scoop of vanilla ice cream, but it's also really good with some vanilla yogurt or just a little half and half... or nothing at all. It's really good that way, too. Enjoy!

(You'll see in the recipe directions that I use the crock pot in an unconventional way. I cook the dessert on low, half uncovered, for the last hour. This helps the peach portion thicken up and the crumbly top crisp a little bit.)

4 lbs peaches, peeled, pitted and sliced

1/4 c. brown sugar, not packed

1 t. cinnamon

1 t. vanilla

cobbler topping:

2 c. old-fashioned oatmeal

1/2 c. brown sugar, not packed

1/2 t. cinnamon

1/4 t. salt

1 stick butter, melted

Put the first four ingredients in the crock pot and stir together. In a separate bowl, pour in the oatmeal, brown sugar, cinnamon and salt. Stir, then slowly pour in the melted butter and continue stirring. Then, pour the crumbly mixture on top of the peach mixture already in the pot. Cook on high for 2 hours. Remove lid and turn it so that steam can easily escape and cook on low (half covered) for one more hour. Serve warm.

Crock Pot Summer Onion Dip



If you read my post about the cute \$7 crockpot that I saw on sale last week, this recipe would be the perfect fit for it! If you have a “little dipper” sized crock pot, you can make this dip and then use the crock pot to serve it and keep it warm. I thought these flavors fused together well for an easy

afternoon snack.

I'd recommend serving my summer onion dip with crisp pita chips, wavy potato chips, baby carrots and cut up celery. It also would be great on a baked potato! It's a basic enough recipe that it would be great on top of pretty much anything. Enjoy!

1/2 c. chopped basil leaves

juice of 1 lemon

8 oz. cream cheese, warmed

1/2 t. black pepper

1 T. Worcestershire sauce

3 T. minced onion

1 clove garlic, minced

Put all ingredients in small crock pot and stir together. Heat

on low for two hours.

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"..."