

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 Mexican Chicken

I'm a big fan of celebrating other cultures, especially their holidays, but it's mostly for the foods we get to enjoy. Cinco de Mayo used to mean margaritas, Corona with lime and maybe some array of indigestion-causing spicy salsas. Now I try for a little more flavor and less debauchery. This Mexican Chicken crockpot is a fantastic combination of spice and creaminess and when your teeth burst through a bite you might just start thinking about moving south of the border.

4 chicken breasts (can be frozen)

1 pkg. taco seasoning

1 can yellow corn niblets, drained

1 can black beans, washed and drained

1 jar of picante sauce (mild, medium or hot)

1 pkg. plain cream cheese (8 ounces)

Directions:

Place frozen chicken breasts in the bottom of a crockpot. Layer all ingredients EXCEPT for the cream cheese. Cook on low for 6-8 hours. Ten minutes before you serve, stir in cream cheese. Serve over rice. Or— make it a day ahead and just add the cream cheese when you reheat!

(recipe originally provided by Preferred Childcare, Inc., Greensboro, NC)

Crock Pot Vegetarian Bean Dip

We're going to a party this weekend and everyone is supposed to bring a side dish to go with a taco bar main course. It sounds like lots of fun (hoping for margaritas, good music and salty lime tortilla chips) and I figured I'd make something in the crock pot that would be hot and spicy, just like the crowd! While other people might bring chips or cold dips, this dish is really easy and yummy and a little unique. It's nice to have a hot dip that doesn't get crusty and weird from sitting out. Feel free to serve this with some additional jalapenos, salsa and sour cream.

1 15 oz. can of vegetarian refried beans

1 c. chunky salsa (mild, medium or hot)

1 c. sliced black olives

1 c. shredded colby jack cheese

1 15 oz. can of black beans, drained and rinsed

1 t. cumin

1 t. chili powder

1/2 c. sour cream

Mix all ingredients together in crock pot, except for sour cream. Cook on low for 3 hours, then add sour cream, mix and heat for 1 more hour on low. Serve with tortilla chips meant for scooping.

(If you have leftovers, try putting a hearty serving into a soft taco shell tomorrow with some shredded lettuce and diced tomatoes, it makes a great second meal!)

Crock Pot Sloppy Joes

Here's your mission if you choose to accept it: *make dinner for four adults and two kids when you are staying at a friends house, you found one pound of ground turkey in the freezer and there is a pantry of assorted cans. And... GO!*

While visiting friends this week, I figured it was only appropriate to help with meals since they are at work all day. I know there is a crock pot on staff in the kitchen, so I accepted this mission without hesitation. Crock pot cooking is just the easiest way to make a crowd-pleasing dish without making a huge mess.

With our mix of adults and kids, I figured crock pot sloppy joes would be great. But with only one pound of meat, I knew that I needed to pump up the dish with some added ingredients. This recipe worked out great because it kept the true flavor of sloppy joes, but included some extra protein. Try this out next time you have to feed friends or family members or are looking for a no-fuss take on an old-time favorite. Enjoy!

1 lb. ground turkey

1/2 medium onion, diced (or 3 T. dried minced onion)

1 green pepper, seeded and diced

1 14 oz. can of black beans, drained and rinsed

1 6 oz. can of tomato paste

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 t. cumin

1 t. black pepper

1 t. chili powder

1 t. garlic powder

1/2 t. salt

1 t. worchestershire sauce

2 t. apple cider vinegar

1 t. yellow mustard

1 c. tomato juice or vegetable juice

1/4 c. water

Brown ground meat thoroughly in 1-2 t. of vegetable oil. Then add green peppers and (fresh) onions, cook until they are soft, and add to crock pot. In a separate bowl, mix together the rest of the ingredients and the pour on top of cooked items in crock pot, stir together. Add in the black beans and stir once more. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Serve on hamburger buns for traditional presentation or use King's Hawaiian Original Rolls to make cute little sloppy joe sliders.

Crock Pot Bean Medley

We're going to a BBQ at my brother's house this weekend and since the assumption is that I'll bring something from the crockpot, I know I need to come up with something tasty and creative. The catch is that I don't really want to go grocery shopping today. So, I'm diving into the pantry in the hopes that I will surface with a plan and an amazing side dish. I

also want to make this dish over night so that it is ready to go in the morning.

Baked beans are a very typical BBQ side dish, but I would like to make a bean dish that isn't brown and smokey or looks like it's was dumped into a bowl and served. Beans are an easily accessible food— even if they look like they were prepared a little different, everyone still usually takes a scoop to eat. This combination is a nice variation because it is more colorful and the light colors are a nice balance for spring. Enjoy!

NOTE: Assume that each can is about 15 ounces. This recipe works best in a 6-quart pot. Feel free to divide all ingredients in half if you are not cooking for a large gathering of people, a sports team or a small army.

2 cans black beans, drained and rinsed

2 cans dark red kidney beans, drained and rinsed

2 cans great northern or cannellini beans, drained and rinsed

2 cans sweet corn kernels, drained

8 oz. frozen cut green beans

1/2 medium onion, chopped

1/2 red bell pepper

1/4 c. apple cider vinegar

1/4 c. brown sugar

1/2 t. celery seed

1/2 t. oregano

1/2 t. black pepper

3 T. ketchup

3 T. tomato paste

1 T. brown or dijon mustard

Drain and rinse all the beans before putting them in the crockpot. Add the rest of the veggies. Mix together the brown sugar, apple cider vinegar, tomato paste, mustard, ketchup and seasonings and dump in on everything in the crock pot. Give it one good stir and then set it on high for 3 hours or low for 5-6.