

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 Beef and Barley Stew



Here's your history lesson for today, folks... let's learn about barley. If you are a "meat and potatoes" kind of person, barley is a great item to add to your grocery list. Barley rations go all the way back to biblical times, I think, it's healthy, hearty and inexpensive; is one of the world's top harvested

grains; and here's a fun one— one of its main purposes is for producing beer and malted beverages.

Now that you've done your studies, let's prepare your eats! This stew is meaty and thick and satisfies the hungriest belly. It is a meal in itself, but I prefer a small bowl of it with a side salad— and a beer, so I can be consuming barley in multiple forms. □ This is a nice variation to the common beef stew.

On a nice fall day like today, your house will be filled with the warm smell of meat, vegetables and an easy dinner. Enjoy!

1 lb. beef stew meat chunks

1 c. baby carrots

4 stalks of celery, cut into chunks

1/2 medium onion, diced

3-4 cloves garlic, chopped

1 15 oz. can diced tomatoes, NOT drained

1 cup pearl barley

3 c. water

1 t. black pepper

1 t. salt

1 t. celery seed

Add all ingredients to the crock pot in this order. Give a little stir, just enough to promote mingling. Cook on low for 6-8 hours.

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 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.

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 Summer Vegetable Puree



As much as winter is the time for soups and stews, I really like summer soups too. This one isn't too hearty since it's a puree and I think it tastes really light when it is served warm, not hot. I've had to become really creative with vegetables this summer— with so much amazing local produce, I

tend to over buy!

I like to base this recipe on carrots, because the orange color of the puree is so inviting, but feel free to experiment with whatever is in your basket. Just remember to include a starch (potato, sweet potato, kohlrabi, etc.) to help thicken the dish and something sweet (apple, beet, melon, peach) to make this unique for summer. Herbs are totally up to your discretion, too. I like fresh basil, but if you have rosemary or thyme or some oregano, those would be great as well.

Whatever you do, you are making a crock pot of wonderful by using fresh vegetables and your imagination. This should be served in a bowl, but it's perfect when it's thicker than soup, but thinner than mashed potatoes. PS— it's also a GREAT puree for baby food, but you can make it for your whole family to eat. Enjoy!

4 c. fresh carrots

2 stalks celery, chopped
2 yellow squash, cut into chunks
1 medium sweet onion, chopped
2 medium potatoes, cut into chunks
1 medium apple, cut off of core
2-3 cloves garlic, chopped
1 t. salt
1/2 t. black pepper
6-8 leaves fresh basil
2-3 c. vegetable broth

Put all vegetables and herbs into the crock pot, pour broth on top. Cook on high for 6 hours. Using immersion blender, puree in pot. (If you don't have one, then let dish cool and puree in batches in a standard blender.) Serve with a dollop of sour cream or greek yogurt on top and a sprinkle of fresh herbs.

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.

Crock Pot Gumbo



I opened up my weekly CSA delivery and was so excited to see the ripe, fragrant produce. One thing in particular caught my attention– OKRA. The first thing I thought of was some hot, spicy gumbo. I think half of what I unpacked is going to end up in the gumbo– okra, tomatoes, basil, corn, green pepper... now

if only I stopped at a farm for some chicken and then headed to the coast for some shrimp, but I guess I'll have to buy those at the grocery store.

Gumbo is a perfect recipe for the crock pot because it needs to simmer for a long time to fuse all those flavors together. Cut your veggies into small pieces so you can have a bit of each morsel in your mouth! This soup would also freeze really well, so make the gumbo for dinner this week and then enjoy all these fresh treats again later this fall when they aren't so available.

This soup can also be made vegetarian if you leave out the chicken, sausage and shrimp. I'd amp up the amount of veggies though and maybe get a little more okra, so that this tastes more robust and unique than just vegetarian vegetable soup.

You can also use Morningstar Farms chicken strips (fake meat) if you'd like to add some protein. Enjoy!

2 boneless, skinless chicken breast, cut into 1/2 inch cubes

1/2 lb. okra, sliced

1 c. of corn (cut off of fresh ears)

1/2 sweet onion, chopped

1 green pepper, seeded and chopped

3-4 ripe, sweet tomatoes, seeded and chopped

3 carrots, peeled and sliced thin

2 stalks celery, sliced

4-6 leaves fresh basil, chopped

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 t. salt

1 t. black pepper

1/2 t. cayenne pepper

1/2 t. paprika

1/2 t. chili powder

1 T. parsley

2 T. Worcestershire sauce

2 T. Tabasco sauce

2 c. water

3 pork sausages, cooked and sliced

1/2 lb shrimp, peeled and cleaned

2 c. cooked white rice

Combine all vegetables in crock pot. Add liquid ingredients. Sprinkle with all seasonings. Place chicken pieces on top of mixture next. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Add shrimp, sausage and cooked white rice and cook for an additional 1 hour on low.

Crock Pot Beef Stew

So after the amazing stroganoff last week, somehow I still wanted to make more beef. (I think we had BBQ chicken one too many times over the holiday weekend.) So even though it is summer, I thought some hearty beef stew would satisfy my craving for red meat. The nice part about this meal and the hot weather is that a small serving is enough to satisfy and you can use local produce to really enrich the flavors of the stew. I am adding some extra vegetables to my stew that are in season, ripe and fresh right now. Check out your local farmer's market and see what vegetables look good to you. Enjoy!

1 lb. beef, cut into stew meat

1 c. baby carrots

4 stalks celery, cut into 1-inch sections

3 potatoes, skins left on, cut into small chunks

1 small onion, cut into small chunks

1 medium zucchini, cut into 1-inch sections

1 ear of corn, cut kernels off the cob

4-6 oz. fresh green beans, cut into 1-inch sections

2 c. water

3 cloves garlic, chopped

1/2 t. celery seed

1/2 t. paprika

1 T. parsley

1/2 t. salt

1 t. black pepper

To finish: 1 T. corn starch dissolved in 1/3 c. cold water

Put all ingredients into the crock pot and give it all a stir. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Add water with dissolved corn starch and heat for 1/2 hour on high. Remove bay leaves before serving.

Crock Pot Carrot Cake



I would like to begin this post with an argument. The title of carrot cake is really a misnomer. This shouldn't be considered a dessert. It is based foremost on a VEGETABLE for goodness sake! It is a carbohydrate next and then a treat after that. It is vegetarian, kosher, can be low

fat and I'd almost put the gold sticker of "healthy" on it!

Based on these clear and evident facts, I would like to share with you my recipe for crock pot carrot cake. Serve it for breakfast, after lunch, for an afternoon or evening snack or just about any point of the day. Chalk it up as doing a good deed for yourself. And trust me, this tastes soooo much better than drinking v8!

1 c. flour

1 c. oatmeal

1/2 c. sugar

1/2 c. applesauce

2 t. potato starch

1/4 c. apple juice

1/4 c. vegetable oil

1 t. baking powder

1 t. baking soda

1 t. cinnamon

1 c. grated carrots

1 t. vanilla

1/2 c. raisins

1/2 c. chopped walnuts (optional)

Mix all ingredients in a separate mixing bowl by hand. Coat a loaf pan with non-stick spray and then pour batter in. Place entire loaf pan in crock pot (use oval shaped crock pot to make it fit). Cook on high until center of cake is no longer jiggly— about 2-2.5 hours. Let cool and then smear with whipped cream cheese or cream cheese frosting.