

# Crock Pot Cheese-Stuffed Meatballs



Already looking good!

While on vacation over the holidays, we stayed at the Happy Pelican, a wonderful beach house on the North Carolina coast. I love the delight of staying somewhere with a fully-stocked kitchen AND a beautiful view. My sister-in-law and I figured out a week's worth of menus, split the to do list, and prepped easy meals to enjoy that required minimal kitchen time and maximum beach time. It was so much easier to dine all together at the house instead of trying to coordinate eating out!



Cheese-Stuffed Meatball Sub, broiled to perfection!

But with eight healthy appetites to satisfy, we needed to cook mass quantity. By the end of the week, we were down to hamburger meat, string cheese and a few wrinkly vegetables. Easy enough! Just what I needed for these cheese-stuffed meatballs. It takes a little more handy work than our normal crock pot meals, but it was delicious! The kids loved the meatballs and the adults enjoyed meatball subs broiled to a crusty perfection.



Forget the bun and just enjoy the cheese-stuffed meatballs!

If you go on vacation and the house isn't well-equipped with small kitchen appliances, I highly suggest bringing your crock pot along. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Cheese-Stuffed Meatballs

Serves 8-10

2 lbs ground beef

2 eggs

1 c. panko bread crumbs

1/2 c. shredded parmesan

1 c. shredded carrots

2 T. Fresh parsley, chopped

1/2 sweet onion, diced

1 32 oz. jar spaghetti sauce

6 individually-wrapped string cheese

4 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

8 hoagie buns

Unwrap the string cheese and cut each log into 5 pieces (30 pieces total). Set the cheese aside. You are going to make approx. 30 meatballs. Mix together the meat, carrots, onion, eggs, parsley, parmesan, and panko. The mixture should not be liquidy. If it is, add a little more bread crumbs. Eggs are not always the same size (did you know that?!). Take about a golf-ball sized portion and roll into a ball. Flatten it between your palms. Place a cut piece of string cheese in the middle of the patty and then carefully form the ball back around the cheese. You want the cheese to be completely surrounded by the meatball mixture. Place it in the crock pot and repeat 29 more times, approximately, or until the meat mixture is gone.

Wash your hands. Don't be gross.

Pour the jar of spaghetti sauce across all of the meatballs

and then cook on high for 3-4 hours or on low for 6 hours. Your sauce will be a little more watery when it's done because of all of the juices escaping the meat and veggies. These meatballs are now ready to serve.

If you want to make meatball subs, put 3-4 meatballs in each hoagie bun, cover with some shredded cheese and place on a cookie sheet. Broil in the oven until the cheese is melted and starting to brown, but not burnt. That would be gross.

Cooked meatballs will fill refrigerate well and freeze well, but be careful reheating as the cheese may ooze out. It will all still taste delicious, it just might not be as pretty.

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## Crock Pot Noodle Kugel

This is one of my favorite foods from my experience with Jewish holidays. This casserole is sweet and dense with a wonderful warmth of cinnamon and vanilla. The noodles are soft and bound with the creamy egg filling. But my favorite taste is the plump raisins that swell with flavor and are a great contrast to the texture of the noodles.

I've made this dish many times in the oven, so it seemed like an easy transition to do it in the crock pot. Plus, it was so much easier to serve this dish hot as a buffet item when guests could just scoop it up still steaming. Plus— no one had to be embarrassed to have seconds when they could just go back to the crock pot for more!

1 lb. yolk-free broad egg noodles, cooked

5 eggs, beaten

16 oz. sour cream

16 oz. cottage cheese

1/2 c. sugar

1 t. cinnamon

1 T. vanilla

1 c. raisins

1 c. Special K cereal (crushed)

2 T. butter, melted

Mix all ingredients except noodles in crock pot until smooth. Fold noodles into mixture gently. Mix crushed cereal and melted butter in a separate bowl and then flake on top of casserole mixture. Cook on low for 4 hours. For last 15 minutes, position lid sideways so that air can escape during final moments of cooking.

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## Crock Pot Stuffing Balls



Stuffing is an under-appreciated side dish. It completely defines a Thanksgiving dinner and can sometimes be found at kitschy homecooking restaurants, but there is no reason to leave it alone for the rest of the year. Plus, it's a great way to use leftover or stale bread. The more variety you

use in your bread selection will equal a total change in the taste of the end result.

In my fridge right now, I have half a loaf of wheat bread (very dense and yeast-smelling) and half a loaf of what was labeled a "tomato bread" (tastes like Italian bread with a swirl of seasoned tomato paste in it). Here is how to prep your bread for stuffing: cut into slices and then into bite-sized cubes. For example, I would cut a normal piece of wheat bread four times each way = 16 smaller pieces. Then, lay cubes out in one layer on a cookie sheet and cook for about 10-15 minutes at 350 degrees, just until the bread toasts.

Instead of just pouring the stuffing into a pan, I love the idea of hand rolling the stuffing into balls. It cooks into nice individual servings and leaves lots of surface area to crisp. These balls also freeze really well, so make a full recipe and then save what you don't consume. Enjoy!

6 cups homemade stuffing cubes

1/2 medium onion, chopped

1/2 green pepper, chopped

2 eggs, beaten



1/4 c. water

1 16 oz. can cream-style corn

1 T. parsley

1 t. salt

1 t. black pepper

1 t. celery seed

1/2 t. paprika

2-3 cloves garlic, minced

10 little pads of butter or margarine

In a bowl, mix together all ingredients, except butter or margarine. After combined, mixture should be moist, but not dripping wet. Form 10 balls, using your hands and mush it together so that it can stand on it's own. Coat oval-shaped crock pot with non-stick spray. Place stuffing balls side by side in crock pot. Place one little pad of butter or margarine on top of each stuffing ball. Cook on low for 3 hours.

*(The original inspiration from this dish came from crock pot maven Mable Hoffman's Crockery Cookery Cookbook. No offense, but her recipe was bland and suggested using packaged stuffing mix; my adaptation takes it up a notch and makes it flavorful and heartier.)*

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## Crock Pot Blueberry Cobbler

Forget dinner— let's skip straight to dessert. What could possibly be better than dumping everything in the crock pot and having your entire house filled with the glorious, sweet, satisfying smell of freshly baked dessert?! Cooking dessert in the crock pot requires a little more attention to detail than the normal dump-and-go meal prep, but I think you'll really like this recipe. In all honesty, it still only took me 6

minutes from start to finish to get everything into the crock pot. Since this is a slow cooking method, you won't dry out or burn the edges of your tasty treat like you might in the regular oven. Plus, it is way better to use the crock pot for a few hours than to heat up the entire house with conventional baking.

This cobbler recipe can also be made using a variety of other fruits. Go for what is in season, grown locally or on sale in the freezer section; I would suggest trying cherries, peaches, apples, mixed berries or maybe some ripe pears. If you want this dish to be even more divine, throw in a 1/2 c. of butterscotch morsels or chocolate chips with the top layer. Enjoy!

1 c. flour

2 t. baking powder

1/2 t. salt

1/2 c. granulated sugar

1/2 c. packed brown sugar

2 eggs

2 t. vanilla

2 t. butter, melted

1/2 c. half and half or milk

16 oz. fresh or frozen blueberries

topping:

1 c. quick oats

1/3 c. flour

2 t. melted butter



1/2 t. cinnamon

2 T. brown sugar

Spray the entire crock pot with a non-stick spray. In a separate bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder, salt, sugars, eggs and vanilla. Add the melted butter and half and half. Dump in blueberries and stir well. Pour into crock pot. Then, in another separate bowl, cut together the topping ingredients. Sprinkle topping on top of mixture already in crock pot and DO NOT MIX. Cook 4 hours on low or 2 hours on high.

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## Crock Pot Mac and Cheese

Mac and cheese= kid favorite, adult favorite, crowd pleaser. Unless you are lactose intolerant, I'm guessing mac and cheese is a staple in your diet and probably gives you warm fuzzies of memories as a kid. Whether you liked the stove top blue box, orange carton that went in the oven or something homemade with buttery crumbles on top, cheese and noodles are a great combination.

Noodles are a challenge for the crock pot, however. I would recommend cooking the noodles in advance. I know it makes TWO pots to clean instead of just one, but it's the best way. You can reuse the pot to make the sauce before pouring it into the crock pot. You may be saying, but then isn't this a stove top recipe and not a crock pot recipe? But by adding these things together into the crock pot, you are actually working to increase the creaminess, less the seasoning melt together and ultimately have dinner ready when you get home.

I also would recommend shredding the block of cheese by hand instead of buying preshredded cheese. It makes it a little creamier, although I'm not quite sure why. But if you cook the noodles in advance and shred the cheese too, you are eliminating some of the prep time to make it easier to start this dish over breakfast and then enjoy it at dinner time.

Once this becomes one of your favorite dishes, there are lots of ways to add variety: add 1/2 c salsa or 4 strips of crumbled bacon or freshly snipped chives or some steamed vegetables like broccoli or peas. If you want more protein in the dish, add a packet of drained tuna fish or some fajita-style chicken strips. If you are serving this to adults and want to make it more grown up, try different shape noodles instead of the traditional shell or elbow macaroni. However you make it, I hope this becomes one of your favorite recipes too and helps to make new warm fuzzies for you, your friends and your family.

8 oz pasta, cooked and drained (try shells or elbow macaroni if you want to be traditional)

4 T. butter

4 T. flour

1/2 cup half and half creamer

1 c. milk

1 egg, beaten

8 oz sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

8 oz. mild cheddar cheese, shredded

1 t. white pepper

PINCH of nutmeg (just a weeeee bit)

4 oz. whipped cream cheese

Cook the package of noodles according to the box, this step can be done in advance and should not be done in the crock pot. On the stove, melt the butter in a pot, then slowly stir in the flour until it is all dissolved. Slowly add the creamer, milk, beaten egg and seasonings while still continuing to stir and then remove pot from heat. This mixture should thicken. Now for the crock potting instructions– first, spray pot with non-stick spray. Add noodles, creamy mixture from pot and then the shredded cheeses. Mix this all together. Then, cook on low for 4 hours. About an hour before you want to serve this, add the whipped cream cheese and stir it all together. This last step adds a special creaminess to your mac and cheese.

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## Crock Pot Bread Pudding



This crock pot bread pudding makes a great breakfast or dessert!

If you could smell my house right now, it is sweet and a little spicy with a creaminess swirling around with every breath. Somehow, it is like a combination of slow Sunday mornings and early weekday diner breakfasts. If you are preparing your house for the Jewish holiday of Passover– this is the ultimate way of using up the last of your *chametz* (leavened bread). You can use any combination of plain breads, but I'd recommend using white, wheat, french, italian... even leftover hamburger or hot dog buns if you've got them. Honestly, this might be for dessert, but if I had more bread to use, I would totally make it again for breakfast.

As this time of year seems to fill with baby and wedding showers in preparation for summer celebrations, I would also absolutely recommend making this to share at a brunch. Since it only takes three hours, you can start it when you wake up and be ready to entertain guests with ease. For my male readers and/or sports fanatics– you might be spending too many nights staying up and watching March Madness basketball games; start the following day with this hearty dish to help wake you up and fill you up (and maybe even absorb that last bit of “adult beverage” festering in your belly).

So no matter what category you might fit into from this post, I think you all will fall in love with this sweet dish. Enjoy!

6 c. cubed bread

8 eggs, beaten

4 cups milk

1/4 c. sugar

1 t. cinnamon

pinch nutmeg

1 t. vanilla

2 T. maple syrup

1/2 c. raisins

Throw all the bread cubes into the crock pot first. Then, in a separate bowl, mix together the eggs, milk, sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg and vanilla. Pour mixture onto the bread crumbs and make sure all pieces are coated. In another separate (small) bowl, mix together the raisins and maple syrup and then sprinkle the coated fruit on top of the swelling bread in the crock pot. Cook on high for 2.5 to 3 hours. You want to make sure the eggs are cooked through and there isn't any liquid left.

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## Crock Pot Tapioca Pudding

Growing up, my dad really liked tapioca pudding and I could never understand why he enjoyed eating eyeballs. They look gooey and slimy and smelled like playdough. I also remember seeing vats of it at Chinese buffet restaurants and was again reminded of things like eyeballs and fish eggs.

Then I discovered that with a little love, it could actually be a delicious treat. The addition of vanilla and cinnamon make this more of a dessert, but I wouldn't be opposed to eating it for breakfast. As an additional note—tapioca pearls are also a great way to thicken up desserts, stews and sauces, but use the small pearls in those instances.

Try serving this dish with vanilla wafers or a few little chocolate cookies that might be "thin" and "minty". If you eat it warm, you might also like it with some pound cake and fresh fruit.

4 cups milk

1/2 c. sugar

1/2 c. tapioca

2 eggs, lightly beaten

1 t. vanilla

1/2 t. cinnamon

pinch nutmeg

Mix everything together in the crock pot and then cook on low for 4 hours or on high for about 2 hours. Can be served warm or cold.