

Crock Pot Escalloped Cabbage Casserole

My husband's family use to have this amazing tradition; every Wednesday night we would all go to his grandmother's house for dinner. Gaga's recipes usually start with butter or oil and a little salt and pepper and from there, it could be chicken or beef or vegetables or any number of simply wonderful simple dishes. But one of my favorites is Gaga's cabbage casserole.

Every time Gaga made this, I knew that the kitchen would be uncomfortably warm from the oven being on and that it would taste so good that there would rarely be leftovers. This dish doesn't even taste like cabbage, it tastes like fluffy goodness that you can say is actually good for you. Save yourself the perspiration and make this dish in your crock pot instead. If you want to finish the casserole off, remove the crock and place it under the broiler for a couple minutes, just so the top layer crisps.

This dish is simple and the salt and pepper really give it most of its flavor, so it's great to make as a complement to pretty much any meat. It's not a main dish, but it will probably be a favorite! I wouldn't recommend freezing this casserole, but refrigerating it and reheating it is fine.

1/2 head cabbage

1 sleeve of saltine crackers (if you want it to taste more buttery, use a Ritz style cracker instead)

milk

3 T. olive oil

salt and pepper

Shred the cabbage, the smaller the pieces, the better. Put the crackers in a zipper bag and smash them till they are itty bitty, but not powder. Layer the cabbage and then the cracker crumbs in the crock pot; in between layers drizzle about 1 T. of olive oil and a pinch each of salt and pepper. When all of the cabbage, crackers, seasonings and oil have been layered, pour milk into the crock pot until it almost reaches the top layer, but not quite. It usually takes about 4 cups of milk. Cook on high for 3 hours. There shouldn't be much liquid left when the casserole is done— the crackers absorb most of it, but make sure that your cabbage is soft, it shouldn't be crunchy at all.

Enjoy this with pretty much anything. Gaga would be proud if you made this on a Wednesday night at your house, too.

Crock Pot Roasted Chicken (and curried chicken salad)

It's Friday! I work hard all week waiting for today. Tonight we get to start our weekend. I can't think of a better way to welcome the weekly 2-day vacation than to have a family meal together at home. To make it more special, we are having guests this evening as well. Ok crock pot, it's time to do your thing and make dinner tonight taste like it was hard to make (but really it's only noon o'clock and it's already done).

The most challenging part of this recipe is making sure that your meat will fit in the crock pot. If you have a round and more vertical design of a crock pot, you might have to use a cornish hen instead of a chicken if you want it to fit! This

recipe really works best in a 5-6 qt. crockpot that is **oval shaped**. I just thought you should know this before you start trying to shove everything in and then being disappointed when it doesn't fit. (*check out my next post about buying a new crock pot!*)

If you have leftover chicken after tonight, I'd recommend making curried chicken salad tomorrow. Add a stalk of fresh, chopped celery (not a cooked one from the pot), add a small can of diced water chestnuts, 1/2 c. quartered red grapes and then enough mayo to make it a good consistency. Then, add curry powder, a little salt and pepper— I can't tell you how much because I don't know how much chicken you have left, but remember that curry powder becomes more potent after it gets a chance to fester. Make this salad up and then put it in the fridge for a couple hours— when it turns a darker copper color (from the curry), it's ready to eat!

Well there you go, I guess it's a two recipe day. You have one for today and one for tomorrow!

Now for to the roasted chicken recipe:

1 3-4 lb. fresh chicken, thawed, rinsed and patted dry

2 T. olive oil

2 cloves garlic, chopped

8 oz. baby carrots

3 stalks celery, cut into 2 inch chunks

1/2 med. onion, cut into chunks

dash of paprika

salt and pepper

If you have a trivet that fits in your crock pot, I'd recommend using it. It keeps your chicken just elevated from

sitting in it's own juices and makes it MUCH easier to pull the chicken out when it is done (which makes for a nicer presentation too). Place chicken in pot- to know it's on the correct side, you should see the smooth skin covering the chicken breasts. Brush the skin with the olive oil and sprinkle with the chopped garlic. Position the carrots, celery and onions around the bird. Sprinkle all contents with paprika, salt and pepper. Cook on low for 8-10 hours, depending on bird size.

Crock Pot Turkey Legs

Thanksgiving might just be one of my favorite holidays. There is something about preparing so many amazing dishes all day long and then sitting around the table with friends and family as we all ooh and ahhh about the foods. That feeling should not just be reserved for one or two days a year! Therefore, I am offering up a delicious new way of preparing turkey and I suggest serving it with ONE of your favorite side dishes from Thanksgiving.

I think most people are fans of turkey's white meat, but I actually prefer the dark meat. It's juicier, has more flavor and has a much less likelihood of getting dried out when cooked. Also, turkey legs are really inexpensive to buy, compared to buying a whole bird, and still tastes amazing. When you make this recipe, the meat will literally fall off of the bone, it is soft and moist without tasting greasy or fatty.

Herbs de provence sounds more foreign than it tastes. I like easy seasonings that blend together in harmony. It's a sultry

combination of thyme, rosemary, basil, tarragon and lavender flowers. It's great on meats or can add lots of flavor to soups and vegetable dishes.

My brother said this recipe is "caveman chic". There's no need to be savage, all the meat falls off the bones before serving it. But if you prefer to dive in without silverware, at least you have the lavender flowers in the herbs de provence to make you seem a little civilized.

3-4 turkey legs (about 2-2.5 lbs)

1 T. olive oil

2 T. herbs de provence

Coat crock pot with non-stick spray so the turkey skin doesn't stick to the pot too much. Place legs in pot and then brush lightly with olive oil. Shake herbs de provence all over turkey legs. Cook for 6 hours on low.