

Summer Series, Day Six: Seafood Paella



This one pot dish is literally named for being made in a pot. It's the original one-dish cuisine.

This, my friends. This is the quintessential dinner that melds together land and sea and balances the forces of nature to create an amazing meal that would make even mermaids and pirates cheer. With more protein than a Brazilian meat festival, this one pot recipe will make you lift your anchors and set full speed ahead toward the coast. And you'll thank me for it. I thanked me for it- I've never made this dish before, but with so much fresh seafood available here in the Outer Banks, it was a challenge I was eager to attempt and declare victory for all.

There are a few more steps than normal because of the complexity of textures in paella (pronounced PIE-Ay-uhhhh) so bear with me and I'll try to break it down step by step so you

can recreate this on your next seaside adventure.

First, gather all of your ingredients. It's helpful to know what goes in at what point so you can simplify your timing.



1. Brown your boneless, skinless chicken thighs over medium-high heat to get a quick sear on the outside. The chicken will have plenty of time to finish cooking the whole way through when it's in the crock pot, but you want to seal in the flavor. After removing from heat, chop chicken into bite-size pieces.



2. Using the same skillet, brown the sliced andouille sausage quickly on both sides and remove from heat.



3. Put brown rice, seasonings, and fresh vegetables in the crock pot. Add broth and give it all a good stir. The turmeric and smoked paprika will flavor the entire dish but begins with this first step. Add bite-size pieces of chicken and cooked andouille sausage. Cook on low for six hours or until all liquid is absorbed.



4. After time is up, it's ok to remove the crock pot lid at this point and give everything a really good stir. Try to keep rice from sticking to the bottom of the crock pot.



5. Add seafoods– shrimp, sea scallops and clams. Be sure to properly clean your seafood before adding to the pot. A sandy clam does not add flavor! If you are peeling and deveining your own shrimp, you need [THIS TOOL](#). Seriously, just get one for yourself at the start of this trip. (You'll use it for the Crock Pot Low Country Boil as well.)

Cook on high for up to one hour– shrimp should be pink and clams should have all opened. You do not want to overcook seafood so try to be nearby for this last step.

And that's it! You have just mastered the Old World, cultivated classic of a seafood paella (technically a mixed paella because of the chicken, but let's focus on the gifts from the sea and the amazing local seafood markets located in the Outer Banks.)

Thank you to the owners of the [Ooh La La beach house](#) here in

Avon. This dish used many of the tools and cooking accessories and your stocked kitchen did not disappoint. I had everything I needed to prep, clean and cook all of my ingredients for this meal. This kitchen set-up made everything easy, including a spacious dishwasher to handle my mess!

Crock Pot Seafood Paella

Serves 6

1.5 cups brown rice

3 chicken thighs

7-8 oz andouille sausage

1 red bell pepper, sliced

2 stalks celery, sliced

1/2 onion, sliced

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 t. turmeric

1 t. smoked paprika

2 cups white wine

2 cups chicken broth

1 lb jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined

1/2 lb bay scallops

1 dozen clams, in shells

Brown your boneless, skinless chicken thighs over medium-high heat to get a quick sear on the outside. The chicken will have plenty of time to finish cooking the whole way through when it's in the crock pot, but you want to seal in the flavor. After removing from heat, chop chicken into bite-size pieces. Using the same skillet, brown the sliced andouille sausage quickly on both sides and remove from heat. Put brown rice, seasonings, and fresh vegetables in the crock pot. Add broth and give it all a good stir. The turmeric and smoked paprika will flavor the entire dish but begins with this first step. Add bite-size pieces of chicken and cooked andouille sausage. Cook on low for six hours or until all liquid is absorbed. After time is up, it's ok to remove the crock pot lid at this point and give everything a really good stir. Try to keep rice from sticking to the bottom of the crock pot. Add seafoods— shrimp, sea scallops and clams. Be sure to properly

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Crock Pot Arugula Lentil Salad



Spring is here! Time for salads and fun.

Spring is here! No really, I mean it. OK, so the northeast might still have snow and the south is already sweating, but hey– it's April– and no one can deny that. We had friends over on Saturday night and all I wanted was an easy dinner of finger foods, fun, and friends. Let's be honest– the first supplies I bought for dinner were the cold liquor and the marshmallows for smores. I started with an antipasto platter of olives, cheese, summer sausage, and stuffed grape leaves, because that pretty much took five minutes to make. But I wanted a light salad that would be filling and knew that I

needed to sneak some protein in there.

So I decided to try lentils in the crock pot as a perfect spring salad topping. I've never made them before, so I did a little reading online. I learned that vegetarians love lentils (no surprise) but that I should never-ever-de-ever put salt in the water when I am cooking them (good to know!). I also read that you don't want lentils to get mushy, so I committed to cooking them on high instead of low.



Lentils are easy to cook and can be used in so many ways!

Lentils turned out to be ridiculously easy in the crock pot. First off, follow the directions about sifting through the lentils for stones or dirt or whatever hippies don't actually like to eat in their plant-based superfoods. Then, use a ratio of about one cup lentils to three cups water. You will have lots of excess water in the crockpot when the lentils are done, but you can easily use a slotted spoon to scoop the lentils out when they are done swimming.

I watched the crock pot a little more closely than I normally do because I really didn't want the lentils to be overdone. I had set it for 4 hours on high, but at about 3 hours, they were done. Next time, I'll know to set it for 3 hours and I can go about my business. This is what having a relationship with your crock pot is all about, but sometimes the trust has

to be earned.

That's it— perfect protein-packed superfood ready to top my spring salad.

So I started with arugula. Added the strained lentils. Topped it with a little bit of sweet pepper relish (you could use regular fresh red peppers if you prefer. For the dressing, I mixed together some fig balsamic vinegar with some herb-infused olive oil. If you have an olive oil store near you, it is totally worth getting these fun flavors and using them to make really easy dressings. Enjoy spring, people! Enjoy a fresh salad, a refreshing adult beverage, and some toasted marshmallows for dessert.

Crock Pot Arugula Lentil Salad

serves 6-8 as sides

2 c. dried lentils

4 cloves garlic, peeled

6 c. water

5 oz. baby arugula, rinsed and chilled

3 T. sweet

pepper relish or 1/2 red pepper, diced

dressing to taste

Put lentils, garlic and water in the crock pot for 3 hrs on high. Use a slotted spoon to remove all lentils. Top arugula with lentils, red pepper, and toss with dressing. Enjoy!

Crock Pot Cauliflower Curry



Crock Pot Cauliflower Curry is a delicious side dish that packs a lot of flavor!

Sometimes I just want a side dish with a little kick and not a lot of calories. I was raiding the pantry the other day and found a can of coconut milk that I didn't remember buying. Funny how that happens, right?! Like, who else would have bought this random item that I don't usually purchase? I must have had an intention for it, but the whim passed and I was still stuck with the can of curious origins.

Then, while trying to decide what to do with it, I debated the cauliflower I bought on a whim as well. I don't know about you, but I find so many recipes online right now reinventing the cauliflower and I go, that sounds good, let's try it! But then I pin 17 other things and forget where I started from. Maybe that's how I wound up with the coconut milk, too!

This dish is QUICK to put together— like five minutes— and is a great way to try a new ingredient or two. Warning- red pepper flakes can be spicier than you anticipate, especially after they fester with the other flavors in the crockpot! Add them timidly the first time you make this dish. It's a side, not a fire!

Crock Pot Cauliflower Curry

Makes 6-8 side dish servings, depending on the size of your cauliflower

1 cauliflower, washed, core removed, chopped into bite-size pieces

1 red pepper, sliced or 6-8 multi-color small peppers, sliced

1 inch of ginger root, peeled and diced

1 yellow onion, sliced thin

3 cloves garlic, diced

1 can coconut milk

1 T. ground curry

1-2 t. red pepper flakes



With just a few ingredients you probably have on hand anyway, you can make this kickin' crock pot side dish!

Add all ingredients to crock pot and cook on low for 4 hours. Cautious of the spice level until you try this for the first time!

Crock Pot Chicken Cacciatore



Happy birthday to my husband. He is an amazing man, father, lover and friend. And he loves my cooking. So for tonight, I wanted to make him a nice dinner. But of course, I still have the kids to take care of today, a house to clean before company and a dog that is begging to go out, so my options

for fine dining were a little limited. I decided to start a crock pot of food at lunchtime instead of at breakfast—our dinner will be done right as the kids are going to bed... so we can eat a meal as adults and maybe even partake in a glass of wine.

I had totally planned on doing chicken fajitas for dinner tonight or some sort of hearty “man” food, but my hubby went out with his coworkers for lunch at a Mexican restaurant, so I needed to reroute my dinner plans. Since I already had the chicken, I decided to make chicken cacciatore (pronounced catch-ahh-toe-ree) instead. It’s robust and filling, but an easy one pot meal.

Cacciatore is usually served over a thin pasta like angel hair, but it can also be served over rice, if you prefer. I like to top mine with grated Parmesan cheese instead of putting the cheese in when it’s cooking. You can also add

other vegetables if you'd like— many cacciatore recipes add mushrooms and/or fresh basil leaves.

You don't need a celebration to dine on this great chicken dish. Enjoy!

4 frozen boneless, skinless chicken breasts

1 small onion, sliced thin

1 green pepper, sliced thin

1/2 red pepper, sliced thin

1/2 yellow pepper, sliced thin

1 medium zucchini, sliced thin

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 28 oz. can petite diced tomatoes

1 c. spaghetti sauce

1 T. parsley flakes

1 t. basil flakes

1 t. oregano flakes

1/2 t. celery seed

1/2 t. black pepper

1/2 t. salt

Combine vegetables in crock pot, top with all seasonings and stir together. Pour in tomatoes and sauce and stir again. Place frozen chicken breasts on top of mixture. Cook on high for 4-6 hours. Serve over thin pasta or rice.