

# Crock Pot Winter Vegetable Soup



Crock Pot Winter Vegetable Soup is the comfort of home served in a cup.

You'll often hear me say that food isn't just about sustenance, but also satisfaction. Entertainment. Emotion. Nutritionists focus on the content of food. Dietician focus on the balance of food. But when I sit down to eat– or more importantly– serve a meal to family and friends, it's about the experience and the memories we create around the table. Your food will be through your system in less than 24 hours, but the feeling you had when eating it will last a lifetime.

That's how I feel about this soup. It's based on a recipe my mom used to make when I was a kid. We ate dinner as a family, almost every night. It's just what we did. And we didn't do it in front of a television or on the run, but it was quick and easy meals and meant to create an atmosphere for conversation.

Mom's meals were much like this one– a basic recipe with few

ingredients that when combined received minimal complaints! We called it winter vegetable soup because nothing really is fresh during an Ohio winter. She could keep all of these items on hand and whip this meal up in about half an hour. I prefer to cook it low and slow, of course, and add a few more seasonings. But overall, it's the comfort of home in a cup.

## **Crock Pot Winter Vegetable Soup**

**Prep Time: 5 minutes**

**Cook Time: 5 hours**

**Serves: 8**

2 12 oz. packages frozen vegetables- broccoli, cauliflower and carrot combination

1 32 oz. box of vegetable broth

3 T. butter

1 t. minced garlic

1/2 cup [crock pot caramelized onions](#) (or substitute 1/2 sweet onion, diced)

1/2 t. each: dill weed, celery seed, basil, parsley, salt, black pepper (ALL DRIED SEASONINGS)

1/4 c. corn starch

3 cups cold milk (2% or whole is preferred)

Pour frozen vegetables into crock pot, followed by broth, butter, garlic, onions and seasonings. DO NOT ADD CORN STARCH OR MILK YET. Cook on high for four hours. In a separate bowl, dissolve corn starch into COLD milk and then add to crock pot. Cook on high for another hour. Soup will have thickened. Add salt and pepper to taste preference.

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# Renovation, Week 9: The Finale

I am pleased to present the new Dinner Is A Crock kitchen! It's been months of hard work, intense labor, and intricate planning, but I am thrilled to welcome you to my home and get back to creating new and exciting recipes to share.

**Week NINE**— let's break it down and see how the transition unfolded...

**Tuesday:** [Carolina Custom Surfaces](#) did a beautiful job installing my new countertops on a very cold day. The guys were courteous and skilled. I love it when people show up to work but take a minute to just step back and admire the progress before they begin. This isn't just an office, this is my home, too. I appreciated that the guys asked me my opinion, like on faucet preferences, and even had great recommendations for counter cleaners (they totally recommended [THIS](#) and [THIS](#) to keep my quartz clean and pretty.)



Even the sun wanted to catch a glimpse of my new countertops from Carolina Custom Surfaces!

My counters were installed perfectly, my house was kept clean, and my kitchen is one step closer to complete. They did such a good job that I'm starting to think about using [Carolina Custom Surfaces](#) to update the bathrooms and get a few custom cutting boards! (*TACOS FOR DINNER USING MY LAST BATCH OF FROZEN COOKED TACO MEAT*)

**Wednesday:** My cabinet installer came by this morning to finish up some last little details. Any man that wants to bring me a crown is fine by me... even if it's just the molding to go up against the ceiling. ☐

This afternoon, the tile backsplash was installed under cabinets behind where the hood will go. The subway has never looked this good.

What a difference in the dimensions of the room with the refraction of sunlight from the tile and countertop! I feel shiny and pretty. (*BOLOGNA SANDWICHES AND [CROCK POT TOMATO](#)*)

SOUP FOR DINNER.)



Such a dreamy sight!

**Thursday:** Today was all about regaining functionality. After nine weeks, I think I am most excited to have running water in the kitchen again! Yes, I realize that I had it in other places in the house, but I am so done with washing dishes in the basement bathroom! (SHOUT OUT TO MY HUBBY SINCE HE DID MOST OF THE DISHWASHING!!) My sink and dishwasher are up and running. And— so are my electrical outlets! I can plug it to a gazillion different places now, so you can anticipate seeing crockpots lining the kitchen at some point in the near future. Haha! (*GRILLED CHICKEN AND KALE BURGERS AND FRESH ZUCCHINI TONIGHT...AND A FEW OTHER THINGS IN PREPARATION FOR THE SNOW TOMORROW!*)

**Friday:** Oh snow, you ruined my perfect finale. But we made it so close! Kudos to Piedmont Natural Gas for braving the roads and still coming to install my range today. I'm super impressed with your commitment to deliver and follow-through for your patient (and slightly crazy) customers. It's in! I'm

good! Just one more thing to go. ([CROCK POT POTATO SOUP FOR DINNER AND A GARDEN SALAD. NOTHING TOO EXCITING.](#))



Shout out to Primo Water—love that my family drinks and cooks with this clean and refreshing bottled water.

I also want to give a shout out to [Primo Water](#)— I actually designed the cabinets around my refrigerator to house the [bottom-loading water cooler](#). I love it for easy access to clean water! I use it for hot tea at least once a day. My boys go to it all day for cold water (or room temperature, depending what your teeth prefer!). I also feel good cooking with it. With all the crazy stories on the news right now about tainted water, I feel really good about getting big jugs of Primo for my family instead of tap water. (The bottles are easy to exchange at places like Harris Teeter, Kroger, Lowe's Home Improvements, etc.)

**Monday:** (I'm playing *Pomp and Circumstance* music as I type this...) The hood has been installed and it's like fireworks going off in here. Not like electric short-circuiting or

anything like that, but like we've reached the culmination of this project and the applause is going wild. Unicorns are seen jumping in the backyard and leprechauns are scurrying around stocking my fridge. Ok... maybe not quite. But when my LG oven reaches full temperature, it does actually play a cute little ditty, so that will have to do for now. (*DINNER TONIGHT: ROASTED CHICKEN AND ROASTED BRUSSEL SPROUTS! ROASTED, PEOPLE! LIKE, IN AN OVEN!!*)

There are some small details to still finish (like painting the bay window), but overall, I could not be more thrilled with THIS:



Check out this beautiful panoramic of the new kitchen with all of the upgrades.

Thank you for staying with me on this adventure! I hope it's helped provide some guidance and guilty pleasure of commiserating with me through these 10 weeks. I can't wait to share new recipes with you very soon! #nokitchennoproblem... it's time to save time and cook slower. Welcome to the new and improved Dinner Is A Crock!



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# Crock Pot Spaghetti Squash



I was walking through the produce aisle this week and excited to see all of the fall produce slowly emerging as the weather starts to cool and the crock pot starts to heat. With squash of every size and variety piled up like presents under a tree, I started loading my cart

with butternut, acorn, and spaghetti squash. But the tipping tower of treasures presents a second issue— how do you prepare and cook these ridiculous looking vegetables? As with most foods that I don't want to fret about, I make them in my crock pot!

If you haven't ever experienced spaghetti squash, you are about to be delighted. I'm pretty sure it's the best diet food ever since it's low in calorie, gluten-free, dairy-free, paleo-friendly, vegan, vegetarian, nut-free, guilt-free, and packed with nutrients and flavor. But what intrigues me most about this cavern of goodness is the bizarre pasta like consistency of the meaty threads.

Here's the prep: waaaaaash the squaaaaaash. I love that you just sounded that out. Seriously though, this thing is going to sit in its entirety in your crock pot all day, let's not harbor fugitives like bugs or germs. Then take a sharp knife and stab the squash 5-6 times so that the heat and moisture can seep in and out to cook the flesh. Yes, it's a vegetable, but I think you can use words like meaty and flesh to describe never-living creatures, too.



Put the 4 lb squash and 2 cups of water in your crock pot for 6 hours on low. When it's done, the squash will deflate a bit and be awkward to lift out. Watch out- it's HOT and full of juices. Let it cool a bit before you handle it. You will need to cut the spaghetti squash in half and scoop out the seeds inside (Throw the seeds away. This is not a pumpkin.)

Use a fork to shred the cooked pasta-like fresh from inside the squash. Once you have scraped it out, throw out the skins. Much like pasta, this is now a wonderful blank slate to begin preparing a delicious dish! Here are a couple ideas to choose from as far as fun flavors to add into your spaghetti squash:

- Add 1 tablespoon butter, 1 teaspoon minced garlic and 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese.
- Add 1 cup alfredo sauce, 1 lb. browned ground beef and a can of stewed mushrooms. Oh look- beef stroganoff!
- Top it with [crock pot chicken cacciatore](#) for a low-fat, low-carb hearty dinner. (Yes, this requires two crock pots.)
- Add a scoop of [crock pot caramelized onions](#) and some cubed mozzarella cheese. French onion spaghetti squash!

Trying a new vegetable dish is no longer a challenge or a disappointing dinner. Enjoy your local seasonal vegetables in these new and exciting ways.