

'twas the **NIGHT BEFORE....**

Many slow cooker recipes can be prepared (or partially prepared) the night before, so getting a meal ready will take only a few minutes.

- Refrigerate ingredients in separate containers, not in the slow cooker itself.
- Cut or chop vegetables, such as carrots and onions, and refrigerate in plastic wrap or covered plastic containers. (Cut potatoes will turn brown, so prepare them in the morning.)
- Slice cooked meats the night before. Cover and refrigerate.
- All herbs and spices can be mixed in a small bowl or plastic bag.
- If you like, measure broth and juices. Cover and refrigerate.

adapting your **OWN RECIPES**

When you want to convert a favorite recipe to use in your slow cooker, consider these things:

- Look for a similar slow cooker recipe to serve as a guide for quantities, amount of cooking liquid and cooking time.
- Unless you're making a soup, reduce the amount of liquid by about half.
- Use less-expensive cuts of meat which work well in the moist heat and low temperatures of the slow cooker. Trim away excess fat.
- Dairy products, such as milk, sour cream and cheese, will break down and curdle during long cooking times. Try canned evaporated milk, nonfat dry milk or canned condensed soups for a smooth sauce. Or add fresh dairy products during the last 30 minutes of cooking.
- Allow sufficient cooking time. Most soups, stews and one-dish meals require 8 to 10 hours on low heat (or 4 to 5 hours on high).

in the **THICK** of it

Because slow cookers are covered during cooking, juices don't evaporate, so you will have an ample supply of rich, flavorful juices. Use these as a base for gravy or a sauce.

- Pour the juices into a saucepan. Remove any excess fat, discard. For every cup of juice, use 1 tablespoon of cornstarch or 2 tablespoons of all-purpose flour. This will give you a consistency like gravy. For a thinner sauce, decrease the cornstarch or flour by half. Mix cornstarch or flour with a small amount of cold water, stirring well. Stir into juices, and cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture is smooth and bubbly. Although using a spoon is fine, a wire whisk can help prevent lumps.
- To thicken stews or other main dishes, turn the slow cooker to high. For each 2 cups of liquid, mix 2 tablespoons cornstarch and 2 tablespoons cold water (or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cold water). Stir mixture into the cooker. Cover and cook 20 to 30 minutes.

Hearty Steak and Tater Soup, p. 20

Betty Crocker