

Title:

Slow cooking using a crockpot.

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Summary:

Many of your favorite recipes can be successfully adapted to the crockpot or slow cooker if you follow a few simple rules. You'll find a basic time/temperature guide for converting recipes, some do's and don'ts for specific ingredients and a few tips for making your slow cooker dishes more flavorful.

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Article Body:

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Liquids

Generally, liquids may be decreased in slow cooking - a general rule of thumb is about half the recommended amount. Unless the dish contains rice or pasta, one cup of liquid is usually enough.

Pasta and Rice

When recipes call for cooked pasta to be added, cook it until just slightly tender before adding to the pot. Add 1/4 extra liquid per 1/4 cup uncooked rice, and use long grain converted rice for the best results. For long-cooking recipes, add cooked rice shortly before serving.

Beans

It is usually best to soak beans overnight before cooking them in the crockpot. Before adding sugar or acidic ingredients, the beans should be softened first, either in the slow cooker or on the stove top. If your recipe includes tomatoes, salt, or other acidic ingredients, the beans should be tender before beginning.

Herbs and Spices

Ground herbs and spices tend to dissipate over long cooking times, so it's best

to add them near the end of cooking. Whole herbs release flavors over time, so are a good choice for crockpot cooking. You should taste and adjust seasonings, if necessary, before serving.

Milk/Cheese

Milk, sour cream, and cream break down over long periods of cooking, and should be added during the last hour. Condensed cream soups are good substitutions for milk and can be cooked for extended times. "Healthy," or reduced fat cream soups can be used in any recipe as a substitute.

Cheeses don't generally hold up over extended periods of cooking, so should be added near the end of cooking, or use processed cheeses and spreads.

Soups

Add water only to cover ingredients in soup, and add more after cooking if necessary for a thinner soup.

For milk based soups, add 1 or 2 cups of water and during the last hour, stir in milk, evaporated milk, or cream as called for.

Vegetables

Dense vegetables like potatoes, carrots, and other root vegetables should be cut no larger than 1" thick, and placed in the bottom of the pot, since they take longer to cook

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