



Extension Nutrition Programs

FSNEP/EFNEP

Cooking When the Cook's Away

Slow cooking is gaining renewed interest as a part of today's busy lifestyles. Slow cookers are designed to cook ingredients slowly during the day while the family is away pursuing their activities. Today's slow cookers heat their contents more thoroughly. They are safer, retain heat for a longer period of time, and come in a variety of sizes.

For Safe and Successful Cooking

1. Always use the slow cooker following manufacturer's directions.
2. Never fill the crock and let food stand more than two hours before turning on the cooker.
3. Keep the lid on. It can take 20 minutes to regain the heat lost from removing the lid. If the recipe calls for stirring or adding ingredients, replace the lid as soon as possible.
4. Fill the crock at least half full when following recommended cooking times. Reduce cooking times when using smaller quantities.
5. Thaw frozen meats and vegetables before placing in the cooker.
6. Place vegetables in the crock first as they take longer than meats to cook
7. Dry beans can be successfully cooked in the cooker by following these simple guidelines: Precook beans in the slow cooker overnight with just enough water to cover, then drain. Or, simmer the dry beans in unsalted water for 10 minutes and then drain. Place in the slow cooker with other ingredients, including fresh water.
8. Avoid recipes with dairy products, which tend to break down with extended cooking times. Skim milk has a tendency to curdle and natural cheese breaks down. Evaporated milk, condensed soups and processed cheeses work much better.
9. Change cooking times to meet your schedule. One hour on HIGH generally equals two hours on LOW.
10. If a pasta recipe needs to cook longer than 3 or 4 hours, it will fall apart or become "gummy."

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Slow-Cooker Enchiladas

Yield: 6 servings

- 1 pound extra lean ground beef
- 1 cup chopped onion
- ½ cup chopped green pepper, optional
- 1 16-ounce can pinto or kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes and green chilies, undrained
- 1/3 cup water
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin, optional
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup reduced fat shredded cheese
- 6 corn tortillas (6 or 7 inches)

1. In a skillet, cook beef, onion, and green pepper until beef is browned and vegetables are tender; drain.
2. Add the beans, tomatoes, water, and spices; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 10 minutes.
3. In a 5-quart slow cooker, layer about ¾ cup beef mixture, one tortilla and about 1/3 cup cheese. Repeat layers. Cover and cook on low for 5-7 hours or until heated through.

Adapting Recipes

Most of your favorite recipes can be adapted to the slow cooker. Cut the liquid when converting a non-slow cooker recipe. Use about half the liquid called for in the original recipe. Liquids will not “boil away” as in conventional cooking. You can always add more liquid later if needed. The only **exception** to this rule is for soups and any recipes that contain **long grain converted rice**.

Slow cooking is “one step” cooking and many steps in the recipe can be deleted. Everything can usually go into the cooker at one time. The exception is milk, sour cream and natural cheeses that should be added during the last hour of cooking in “soupy” dishes. Most uncooked meat and vegetable combinations will require at least 8 hours of cooking on LOW.

Time Chart for Adapting Recipes

If the recipe says:	Cook on Low:	Cook on HIGH:
15 to 30 minutes	4 to 6 hours	1 ½ to 2 hours
35 to 45 minutes	6 to 10 hours	4 to 6 hours
50 min. to 3 hrs	8 to 18 hours	4 to 6 hours

Adapted from *Healthy Living A-Z*, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Bean Bag Soup

Yield: 12 servings

- 2½ cups dried beans or peas (such as 1/3 to ½ cup each of baby limas, navy, kidney, black, pinto, lentils, split green peas)
- Ham bone or ham hock
- 1 minced clove garlic
- 1 28-oz. can tomatoes
- 1 large onion, diced
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1 diced green pepper
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Wash beans, cover with water, soak 3 hours or overnight.
2. Drain. Put beans in large pot. Add 2 quarts water and a ham bone or hock, cover and cook slowly for 3 hours.
3. Remove meat from bone and return meat to pot. Add minced garlic, tomatoes, onion, lemon juice, green pepper, and sugar. Cook for 1 hour. Salt and pepper to taste.

