



# MAKE YOUR FOOD DOLLARS COUNT

A Publication of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County

## Using Your Slow Cooker

Slow cookers or "crockpots" have been around since the '70's, but we sometimes forget how convenient they can be for busy schedules. Here are some ideas:



### "Crockpot" Chicken

3-4 pound roasting chicken (cut up)\*  
3 small onions, chopped

2 medium potatoes, cubed  
2 medium carrots, sliced  
1 cup water  
herbs or seasonings of your choice (optional)

Place vegetables in bottom of slow cooker. Wash chicken pieces and place on top of vegetables. Add water and sprinkle with herbs or seasonings. Cover and cook 8-10 hours on low or 3-1/2 to 5 hours on high. Refrigerate leftovers.

\*Reduce the fat by removing the skin before cooking.

**Yield:** 12 servings; serving size 3/4 cup (140 calories, 3 grams fat, 75 mg cholesterol, 95 mg sodium)

### Lazy Cabbage Dish

1 cup raw rice (brown preferred)  
1 pound ground beef or turkey  
1 small head cabbage, shredded  
1 medium onion  
2- 10.5oz cans condensed low sodium tomato soup



Put rice in bottom of slow cooker. Brown meat in separate pan and drain fat. Mix with cabbage, onion, tomato soup and 1 can of water. Place on top of rice. Cover and cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 6 hours.

**Yield:** 18 servings; serving size 1 cup (120 calories, 3.5 grams fat, 20 mg cholesterol, 40 mg sodium)

### Spaghetti Sauce



1/2 cup chopped onions  
1 green pepper finely chopped  
1/2 pound ground beef  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1- 10.5 oz. can low sodium tomato soup  
1 -6oz. can tomato paste  
2 -28oz. cans tomatoes-(pureed or crushed)  
1 -15oz. can low sodium beef broth  
1 teaspoon oregano  
2 carrots chopped and pureed with 1 cup water

Brown beef with the onions, pepper and garlic in separate sauce pan; drain fat. Put drained meat and vegetables in slow cooker with remaining ingredients.

Cook on low for 7 to 8 hours.

Note that all the vegetables can be placed in a blender with the tomatoes and pureed if desired. (no water needed)

**Yield:** 24 servings; serving size 1/2 cup (60 calories, 1.5 grams fat, 10mg cholesterol, 170 mg sodium)

### Beef Stew

2 pounds beef chuck or stew meat (cut into 1 inch cubes)  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1 clove garlic  
1 teaspoon paprika  
1-1/2 cups low sodium beef broth  
4 medium carrots, sliced  
3 medium potatoes, (cut into 2 inch cubes)



2 small onions, chopped  
1 stalk celery, sliced  
Place meat in slow cooker. Add remaining ingredients; stir to mix well. Cover and cook on low 10 to 12 hours or on high 4 to 6 hours. To thicken, mix 5 tablespoons corn starch with 1/4 cup water. Stir into the beef stew and thicken as desired.

**Yield:** 12 servings; serving size 3/4 cup (220 calories, 9 grams fat, 75 mg cholesterol, 80 mg sodium).



## Slow Cooker Test for Safety

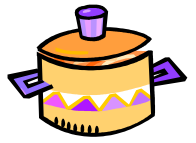
A safe slow cooker, cooks slow enough for unattended cooking, yet fast enough to keep food out of the bacterial danger zone (above 40°F to below 140°F). In the danger zone, bacteria grows very rapidly. Food left in the danger zone too long can cause foodborne illness.

To determine if a slow cooker is safe to use:

1. Fill the slow cooker one-half to two-thirds full of tap water.
2. Heat on a low setting for 8 hours with the lid on.
3. Check the water temperature with an accurate food thermometer. Do this quickly because the temperature drops 10 - 15 degrees when the lid is raised or removed. The temperature of the water should be 185°F. Temperatures below this would indicate the slow cooker does not heat food high enough or fast enough to avoid potential food safety problems.
4. If a temperature of at least 185° is not reached, the slow cooker is unsafe and should not be used.



## Slow Cooker Food Safety Tips



- Begin with a clean slow cooker, utensils and work area. Wash hands well before and during cooking.
- To simplify clean up, before adding ingredients spray the inside of the crock with a non-stick cooking spray or line the crock with a heat resistant nylon liner available for 3 - 6.5 quart round or oval crocks.
- Keep perishable foods refrigerated until preparation time. Refrigeration assures that bacteria, which multiply rapidly at room temperature, will not get a "head start" in the first few hours of slow cooking.
- If you cut up meat and vegetables in advance, store them separately in the refrigerator.
- Thaw frozen meat, poultry, and other ingredients in the refrigerator before adding to the slow cooker.
- Do not use the slow cooker to cook large pieces of food like a whole chicken or roast because the food will remain in the bacterial "danger zone" too long. Cut meat, poultry and vegetables into medium to small uniform pieces to ensure rapid heat transfer.
- Preheat the crock before adding ingredients or cook on the highest setting for the first hour.
- When cooking meat or poultry, the water or stock level should almost cover the ingredients to ensure effective heat transfer throughout the crock.
- Since vegetables cook the slowest, place them near the heat, at the bottom and sides of the slow cooker.
- Do not overload the crock. Fill to a minimum of 1/2 full and a maximum of 2/3 full.
- Do not lift the lid or cover during the cooking cycle. Each time the lid is raised, the internal temperature drops 10 - 15 degrees and the cooking process is slowed by 30 minutes.
- Use an accurate food thermometer to test food doneness: Poultry 180°F, Pork 170°F and Beef 160°F.
- Do not leave cooked food to cool down in the crock. Either consume it immediately or place leftovers in shallow containers and refrigerate immediately. Never reheat leftovers in the slow cooker.

### Free Nutrition Education Programs



Nutrition staff are available to help limited income individuals and families throughout Herkimer County stretch their food dollars to feed themselves and their families better.

Lessons can take place in participants homes or worksites as well as at community centers. Newsletters and other resources are also available by mail.

#### Topics include:

- Budgeting and stretching food dollars.
- Basic nutrition and menu planning.
- Preparing low cost, easy recipes and menus.
- Preserving, storing and preparing food safely.

#### Contact:

Cornell Cooperative Extension  
5657 State Rt. 5,  
Herkimer, NY 13350  
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Nutrition Outreach & Education Program of Catholic Charities of Herkimer County

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