



# 8 Great Things to Cook in Your Slow Cooker, Plus Recipes

By Mary Margaret Chappell  
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Ever since Crock-Pot came out with the very first set-it-and-forget-it appliance in 1970, electric slow cookers have been kitchen mainstays for busy cooks. These days, slow cookers come in many different shapes, sizes, and forms—rice cookers and multi-cookers like the [Instant Pot](#) come equipped with slow-cook functions—but the method remains the same: cooking food in a tightly covered pot using heat that's low and slow. Slow cookers are fantastic for making deeply flavorful soups and stews; they're also convenient for prepping beans, grains, and other basics. Read on for our top slow-cooker tips and recipes.

## Basics to Make in a Slow Cooker

The following are some of the best basics to make in a slow cooker. Some of them may surprise you! (And scroll on or click here for [slow-cooker soup and stew recipes](#).)

### 1. BEANS\* AND LENTILS

Fun fact—the Crock-Pot was initially designed and marketed as a [bean](#) cooker. There's no need to pre-soak dried beans and lentils before cooking them in a Crock-Pot or other slow cooker; the extended cook time stands in for the soaking process.

**\*A note on kidney beans:** Dried kidney beans contain high levels of PHA, a protein that can cause gastric distress. The protein is destroyed by extended exposure to boiling temperatures (212°F or above). A slow cooker's temperature range can't guarantee that kind of heat, so it's best to cook kidney beans on the stovetop or in a pressure cooker.

#### Basic Slow-Cooker Beans Recipe

Place the beans in the slow-cooker pot; cover with 2 inches of water, and add seasonings (such as bay leaf, kombu, garlic, or onions). Cook on low for 6 to 8 hours or until the [beans](#) are perfectly tender.

### 2. WHOLE GRAINS

Whole grains have a pesky way of boiling over on the stove and overcooking or undercooking in a pressure cooker. Slow-cooking them frees you up from watching a pot or worrying about doneness, all while infusing each grain with whatever flavors you add to the cooking liquid.

#### Basic Slow-Cooker Grains Recipe

Cook brown rice 2 to 3 hours and whole-kernel grains (such as [wheat berries](#) or [sorghum](#)) 3 to 4 hours on high. Resist the urge to check on them too often; lifting the lid lets heat and moisture escape and can alter cooking times.

### 3. VEGETABLE STOCK

You can take any vegetable stock or broth recipe, triple the cooking time, and make it in the slow cooker on high power. The resulting liquid will be crystal clear and deeply flavorful.

#### Basic Slow-Cooker Vegetable Stock Recipe

Place 4 cups vegetables (any veggies except cabbage will do) or vegetable scraps in the slow cooker. Cover with 4 cups water. Cook on high power 3 to 4 hours. Strain.

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### 4. TOMATO SAUCE

When you make [tomato sauce](#) in a slow cooker, you can skip any sautéing and just simmer all the ingredients 4 to 6 hours on low (or 3 to 4 hours on high).

### 5. APPLESAUCE AND FRUIT COMPOTES

The low heat of a slow cooker teases out the flavors and concentrates the sweetness of applesauce and fruit compotes.

#### Basic Slow-Cooker Applesauce/Compote Recipe

Place 2 cups peeled and cut apples (or other fresh or thawed frozen fruit) in the slow cooker with ½ cup water. Cover and cook on high power 1½ to 2 hours. Leave fruit chunky; mash it; or blend to make a smooth sauce or purée.

### 6. IRISH OATMEAL

Who's got time to cook (and continually stir) steel-cut oats for 30 minutes on a weekday morning? The slow cooker lets you skip the hassle and wake up to creamy hot cereal for breakfast. Added bonus: Clean-up is a snap, since the low temperature helps keep the oats from sticking to the pot.

#### Basic Slow-Cooker Oatmeal Recipe

Before you go to bed, measure 1 cup steel-cut oats and 4 cups water into the slow cooker. Cook on low for 6 to 8 hours (while you sleep).

### 7. SPICED POTATO WEDGES

Didn't know a slow cooker could be used for potato wedges? This hack, which lets potatoes steam in their own moisture, yields spuds that are both firm and fork-tender, somewhere between boiled and roasted.

#### Basic Slow-Cooker Potato Wedges Recipe

Cut potatoes or sweet potatoes into wedges. Add to slow cooker along with desired spices or seasoning blends. Stir to coat. Cook on high 4 to 6 hours, or until the potatoes are tender.

### 8. SOUTHERN-STYLE GREENS

When dark, leafy greens are simmered for hours, their flavor mellows and they become meltingly tender.

#### Basic Slow-Cooker Greens Recipe

In a slow cooker combine 2 pounds of chopped greens (such as kale, collards, mustard, or turnip greens); 32 ounces of vegetable broth or water; 1 large onion, sliced; and 2 cloves garlic, minced. Cook 4 to 6 hours on high power.

### Vegan Slow-Cooker Dinner Recipes

These vegan slow-cooker recipes yield robust stews that are steeped in flavor and free of animal products.

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- [Slow-Cooker Chana Masala](#)
- [8-Ingredient Slow-Cooker Chili](#)
- [Slow-Cooker Vegan Cassoulet](#)
- [Slow-Cooker Ratatouille](#)
- [Creamy Vegan Potato-Leek Soup](#)
- [Hearty Slow-Cooker Vegetable Stew](#)
- [Irish White Bean and Cabbage Stew](#)

### Converting a Stovetop Soup Recipe for a Slow Cooker

Just about any soup or stew recipe can be made in a slow cooker. Here's a convenient chart of cooking times to help you with the time conversions.

#### Stovetop

15–30 minutes  
30–60 minutes  
1 hour+

#### Slow Cooker, Low Setting

3–4 hours  
4–6 hours  
8–10 hours

#### Slow Cooker, High Setting

2–3 hours  
3–4 hours  
6–8 hours

### Slow-Cooker Temperatures

Slow-cooker temperatures generally range between 190°F and 210°F to keep foods at a simmer. High settings on a slow cooker will take about half the time to cook foods (3 to 4 hours) as low settings (6 to 8 hours). Exact temperatures can vary slightly from appliance to appliance.