



# From the Food Bank Kitchen

The Food Bank  
of Western Massachusetts

## Take it Slow

*Slow Cookers (often generically referred to by the brand name “Crockpot”) have been around for decades, and come in a variety of sizes from 1 to 6 quarts. They are an efficient appliance for someone who will be gone all day but wants to serve a substantial home-cooked meal at dinner. Most have a lift-out insert for ease of cleaning, and they are mobile to transport your dish out of the home. You can use cheaper cuts of meat such as round, shoulder, shank, rump, brisket and chuck, and they will tenderize while cooking in liquid for hours. Most recipes can be cooked on low for many hours OR can be cooked in half the time on high. Some recipes call for browning meats in a skillet or under the broiler prior to adding to the cooker. This step is especially recommended for lamb, beef and ground meats, and adds more complex flavor. To reduce sodium, use no added salt broths, and rinse canned beans. Be sure to use the right size cooker for the volume of ingredients; the cooker should be at least 2/3 full; otherwise food can cook too quickly and may run out of liquid. Ground spices should be added toward the last couple of hours to maximize flavors. Be sure to **LEAVE THE LID ON**. The steam that condenses on the lid helps cook the food from the top. Each time the lid is lifted, the cooker loses steam and it can take 10-20 minutes to regain the lost steam and temperature, which could lengthen cooking time.*

### Slow-Cooker Chicken Stew (8 1 cup servings) The [SparkPeople](#) Cookbook, Meg Galvin

Start this before work and dinner is ready when you walk in the door. It is simple and hearty, the perfect meal for a cold winter’s day. Change the vegetables, herbs and spices depending on what you have in your pantry.

- 2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cubed
- 4 medium carrots, chopped (2 cups)
- 1 lb russet or Yukon gold potatoes, cubed (4 cups)
- 4 medium ribs celery, chopped (1 cup)
- 1 medium onion, chopped (1 cup)
- 8 oz mushrooms, quartered (optional)
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried marjoram
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 4 cups water or low sodium chicken broth

**Nutrition Facts:** Calories 203, Fat 4 gm, Cholesterol 72 mg, Sodium 124 mg, Protein 21 gm, Carbs 22 gm, Fiber 4 gm

**Directions:** Place the chicken, carrots, potatoes, celery, and onion in the slow cooker. If adding mushrooms, scatter them on top. In a small bowl, mix together the garlic powder, thyme, oregano, marjoram, basil, and pepper. Sprinkle the seasonings over the chicken and vegetables, and add the bay leaf. Add the lemon juice to 4 cups of water or stock and pour it on top. Put the lid on the slow cooker. Cook on high for 4 hours, or on low for the day. Remove the bay leaf before serving.

### Slow-Cooker Sloppy Joes (Serves 6) [WeightWatchers Slow Good Cookbook](#)

Aptly named for their less-than-neat appearance, Sloppy Joes are always popular with little and big kids alike. Make a double batch of filling (everything will still fit in the slow cooker) and set aside half to freeze for another meal.

- 1 lb ground lean beef (7% or less fat)
- 1 (14 1/2 oz) can diced tomatoes, low sodium
- 1 diced onion
- 1 diced fresh green pepper
- 3 Tbsp packed dark brown sugar
- 2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 6 soft whole-grain hamburger buns

**Nutrition Facts:** Calories in 1 sandwich 285, Fat 7 gm, Saturated fat 2 gm, Cholesterol 51 mg, Sodium 500 mg, Protein 21 gm, Carbs 34 gm, Fiber 3 gm

**Directions:** Heat a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the beef and cook, stirring frequently to break it up, until browned, 5-6 minutes. Transfer the beef to a 5- or 6-quart slow cooker. Add the tomatoes, brown sugar, Worcestershire sauce, cumin, chili powder, and salt; mix well. Cover and cook until the flavors are well blended and the sauce has thickened slightly; 3-4 hours on high or 6-8 hours on low. Fill each roll with 1/2 cup of the beef mixture.

## Chunky Veggie Pumpkin Chili (11 one cup servings) [Hungry Girl to the Max](#), Lisa Lillien

- One 28 –ounce can crushed tomatoes
- One 15-oz can pureed pumpkin
- 2 tsp chopped garlic
- 1/2 Tbsp cayenne pepper, to taste
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/4 tsp salt, to taste
- One 15-oz can pinto beans in chili sauce, not drained

- One 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- One 14.5 oz can low salt diced tomatoes
- 2 cups chopped portabella mushrooms (optional)
- 1 1/2 cups chopped zucchini
- 1 1/2 cups chopped onion
- 1/2 cup canned diced green chiles

**Nutrition Facts:** Calories 131, Fat 1 gm, Sodium 515 mg, Carbs 25 gm, Sugars 7 gm, Protein 6.5 gm, Fiber 6 gm

**Directions:** Add crushed tomatoes, pumpkin, garlic, and all the seasonings to a slow cooker. Mix well. Add all remaining ingredients and stir thoroughly. Cover and cook on high for 3 to 4 hours or on low for 7 to 8 hours. Enjoy!

## Slow-Cooker White Bean Chicken Chili (10 servings 1 heaping cup each)

Chili can come in red and white varieties. This low sodium, low calorie recipe uses white beans and chicken instead of cheese or cream for the white color. Feel free to add corn, sweet potatoes, or black beans if desired for a “checkerboard chili”. Dried beans are used here for economy, but you can use drained and rinsed canned beans if more convenient.

- 2 cups Great Northern beans, dried
- 1 lb boneless/skinless chicken breasts cut into 1 inch cubes
- 1 Tbsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp dark chili powder
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed
- 1 cup diced onions
- 1 cup diced carrots

- 1 cup low-sodium canned diced tomatoes, drained
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- 2 Tbsp chopped green chiles
- 1 Tbsp chopped cilantro

**Nutrition Facts:** Calories 143, Total fat 1 gm, Cholesterol 26 mg, Sodium 101 mg, Carbs 17 gm, Fiber 4 gm, Protein 15 gm

Source: The [SparkPeople](#) Cookbook, Meg Galvin

**Directions:** Rinse dried beans with cold water. Place in a large bowl, cover with water, and soak overnight in the fridge.\* Preheat oven to 375°. Spray a roasting pan with nonstick spray. In a mixing bowl, toss the chicken, cumin, chili powder, and garlic together, then place in the roasting pan. Roast for 10 minutes, stirring them halfway through. Transfer the chicken to the slow cooker. Drain the beans and add to slow cooker along with the onions, carrots, tomatoes, and chicken stock. Cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 8 hours. Before serving, use an immersion blender or potato masher to puree about a quarter of the chili. This will thicken your chili and give it a creamy consistency. Add the chiles and cilantro before serving.

*\*Forget to soak the dried beans overnight?* Rinse beans then place in saucepan with cold water covering them by 3 inches. Bring water to a boil, turn off heat, cover and let stand for 1 hour. Drain beans and proceed with your recipe as planned.

## ‘Cue the Pulled Pork (Makes six 2/3 cup servings) [Hungry Girl to the Max!](#) , Lisa Lillien

- 1 cup canned tomato sauce
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 2 Tbsp plus 2 tsp cider vinegar
- 2 Tbsp plus 2 tsp brown sugar (not packed)
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 12 oz raw lean boneless pork tenderloin, fat trimmed
- 12 oz raw boneless pork shoulder, trimmed of excess fat

- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp black pepper
- 2 cups roughly chopped onion
- Red pepper flakes (optional)

**Nutrition Facts:** Calories 220, Fat 6 gm, Sodium 637 mg, Carbs 16 gm, Sugars 12 gm, Protein 24 gm, Fiber 1 gm

**Directions:** In a slow cooker, mix tomato sauce, ketchup, vinegar, sugar, and garlic powder. Season both types of pork with salt and pepper and add to the pot. Top with onion and lightly stir. Cover and cook on high for 3 to 4 hours or on low for 7 to 8 hours, until pork is cooked through.

Transfer pork to a large bowl. Shred with two forks — one to hold the meat in place and one to scrape across and shred it. Return shredded pork to the slow cooker and mix well. Suggest serving with tossed salad and cornbread.