



Give Them More  
of the  
Good Stuff!

# Slow Cooker Basics



## Shop and Save

- ✿ The slow cooker is a budget-friendly appliance that makes many types of recipes.
- ✿ Slow cookers can save you time and energy. By planning ahead, you can have recipes ready when you want and spend less time in the kitchen.
- ✿ Slow cookers help tenderize less expensive cuts of meat and make it easy to cook dried beans.
- ✿ A slow cooker uses less electricity than an oven.
- ✿ Slow cookers save summer cooling costs because they do not heat up your kitchen.

*A slow cooker can help make tasty, home-cooked meals convenient any time of the year.*



## Slow Cooker Safety

- ✿ Read and follow the safety directions for your slow cooker if possible.
- ✿ Thaw frozen meat or poultry before adding to the slow cooker.
- ✿ Use a food thermometer to check cooked food for a temperature of at least 165 degrees F. Place the thermometer in the center of meat or poultry pieces.
- ✿ If your cooker has a WARM setting, use it only to keep cooked food warm for up to 4 hours.
- ✿ Store leftovers in shallow containers within 2 hours after cooking is finished.
- ✿ Do not reheat leftovers in the slow cooker. Instead, reheat cooked food in the microwave, on the stovetop or in the oven until it reaches 165 degrees F. Then hot food can be put into a preheated slow cooker to keep it hot for serving.

## Tips for Success

- **Fill the slow cooker between one half and two-thirds full. Larger pieces of meat or poultry can be used if the lid fits.**
- **Put slow-cooking vegetables such as potatoes, winter squash or carrots on the bottom or sides of the cooker. Cut vegetables into similar sizes for even cooking.**
- **Use less expensive meats such as beef chuck roast, pork shoulder and chicken thighs. Trim extra fat from meats before cooking.**
- **Keep the lid on to hold in steam and heat unless the recipe directs you to stir or add ingredients.**
- **At higher altitudes, slow cooking may take longer.**



**Check your cooker to be sure it will cook food safely. Fill it halfway with water, cover and turn to LOW. Use a food thermometer to check at 2 hours for at least 165 degrees F. Check again at 8 hours for at least 185 degrees F.**



# Easy Slow Cooker Recipes

## Slow Cooker Beans

1. Rinse dried beans of your choice in a colander under running water. Remove any rocks or leaves.
2. In a large bowl or pot, cover every 1 cup beans with 3 to 4 cups water. Soak in the refrigerator for at least 6 hours.
3. Drain and rinse beans, then pour into a slow cooker. Add enough water or broth to cover them plus 2 inches. Fill the slow cooker between  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{2}{3}$  full.
4. Cover and cook until beans are soft and tender, about 4 hours on HIGH or 6 hours on LOW.

### Note:

❁ Add seasonings of your choice before or after slow cooking.

**Makes** 3 cups cooked beans for each 1 cup dried beans

**Prep time:** 5 minutes + 6 hours soaking

**Cook time:** 4 to 6 hours

Go to  
[FoodHero.org](http://FoodHero.org)  
for simple  
and tasty  
recipes

## Convert Recipes for Your Slow Cooker

- ❁ Recipes with directions to simmer on the stovetop or roast in the oven at a lower temperature are the best choices. Otherwise look for recipes designed for a slow cooker.
- ❁ When making soups and stews, reduce the liquid in the original recipe by about  $\frac{1}{3}$ . For recipes that do not include liquid, add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup water or broth.
- ❁ To convert cooking time, try 4 to 5 hours on HIGH for recipes that simmer or roast for about 1 hour. Try 7 to 9 hours on LOW for recipes that cook for more than an hour.
- ❁ Add dairy, such as yogurt, sour cream or cheese, at the end of the cooking time.
- ❁ Cook pasta or rice separately and add at the end of the cooking time.

## Salsa Chicken

### Ingredients:

- 2 pounds boneless, skinless **chicken** (try a mix of dark and light pieces)
- 2 cups **salsa** (any type, red or green)

### Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Place chicken in the slow cooker. Pour salsa over chicken and stir until pieces are coated.
3. Place lid on slow cooker. Cook on HIGH for 4 hours or on LOW for 6 to 8 hours. When ready, the chicken will fall apart easily.
4. Shred the chicken in the slow cooker and stir until mixed well.
5. Serve right away, refrigerate for up to 4 days or label and freeze for up to 6 months.

### Note:

❁ Try Food Hero *Quick Tomato Salsa*, *Salsa Roja* or *Salsa Verde*.

**Makes** 6 cups

**Prep time:** 5 minutes

**Cook time:** 6 to 8 hours



## Kids Can!

When kids help make healthy food, they are more likely to try it. Show kids how to:

- ❁ measure and add ingredients to the slow cooker.
- ❁ use a food thermometer to check for safe temperature.
- ❁ help plan menus using slow cooker chicken or beans. Try soup, burritos, tacos, grain bowls or stir-fries.