

Press Release
November 19, 2008

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Slow Cookers

As we enter the busy holiday season with Thanksgiving and Christmas almost upon us, Mom needs relief from heavy kitchen duty. Meals that are simple, light, nutritious and fast--especially fast—save her time without sacrificing her family's nutrition. Fortunately, saving on meal preparation time doesn't have to mean drive-through sandwiches, leftovers or frozen dinners.

Planning and organization do take an initial time investment but ultimately save more time in the kitchen.

Start by planning your meals, keeping in mind how much time you have for preparation. Then prepare a grocery list based on the meals you have planned. The better job you do of planning, the fewer trips you will make to the store, saving you both time and money.

One valuable tool that will help save you meal preparation time is the slow cooker. It's enjoying a resurgence in popularity these days as a new generation of cooks is discovering that it is a kitchen genie.

This countertop appliance cooks foods slowly at a low temperature, which means that vitamins and minerals are retained, less expensive cuts of meat are tenderized and meats shrink less. Your food cooks slowly all day while you are away, freeing you to concentrate on other priorities knowing that supper will be ready to serve when you arrive home.

Most cookers have at least two settings. The two heat settings on most cookers are low (200 degrees) and high (300 degrees). How long it takes for your food to cook depends on the setting you select.

To prevent scorching or sticking in the slow cooker, it is recommended that the lid be lifted occasionally. Every time the lid is lifted, add 20 minutes to the total cooking time.

To qualify as a safe slow cooked, the appliance must be able to cook slowly for unattended cooking, yet be able keep food above the danger zone (above 40 to 140 degrees F.)

To test the safety of slow cooker:

- Fill cooker with 2 quarts of water
- Heat on low for eight hours or desired cooking time
- Check the water temperature with an accurate thermometer (do this quickly as the temperature drops 10-15 degrees when the lid is removed).
- The temperature of the water should be 185 degrees F. Temperatures above this would indicate that a product cooked for eight hours without stirring would be overdone. Temperatures below this may indicate the cooker does not heat high enough or fast enough to avoid potential food safety problems.

There are many recipes that are suitable for slow cookers, giving your family variety in their meals. Give a slow cooker as a gift or just give one to yourself to save you time for those busy days.

Crockpot Navy Bean Soup

1 onion, chopped, sautéed
4 cans navy beans
1 lb sausage, browned, and drained
1 cup chopped ham
1 bay leaf
1 can tomatoes with peppers
Season with pepper

Brown sausage and drain well. Sauté onion until clear. Put all in slow cooker. As you empty beans rinse each can with a little water and add to pot. Put on low to cook all day or high for half a day. Good with broccoli cornbread.