

Notes for LLI Class

More Crock Pot Cooking

Presented by Chef Cal Kraft

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1. Do not overfill the crock pot, meaning do not fill to the top/rim of the crockpot insert. It can boil over/splash and make a mess of your kitchen counter. It can also prevent the lid from sitting correctly on the crock, thus allowing heat/steam to escape and prevent total cooking.
2. Remember, the little glass knob on the lid becomes hot during the cooking processes. Always use a pot holder or mitten to remove the lid. Once you lift it off the pot, (1) allow any steam to flow out of the pot and (2) allow the moisture collected on the inside of the lid to drip back into the pot, and then remove the lid completely and set it aside. Remember, it too will be hot.
3. Frozen foods, especially those with stems like broccoli/Brussel sprouts/cabbage etc. need to be **defrosted prior to being cooked**. In many cases the cores do not defrost and come out raw/under cooked. A safe bet is to defrost all frozen items going into the crock pot so they cook evenly and thoroughly. The one exception I can think of is frozen Pea's.
4. Fresh herbs do not do well in crock pot cooking. The long cooking time literally cooks the flavor out of the herbs. Start with dry herbs, then fresh herbs can be added just prior to the end of the cooking.
5. Dairy – milk and cream and other dairy products sometimes do not do well in long cooking situations. Unless the recipe says otherwise, they should be added the last 15 to 30 minutes of cooking time so they do not break down and spoil the dish.
6. Sometimes cooks cook too long on a high setting. Instead of the protein being flavorful, it becomes stringy and not what it should be. Yes, you can speed things up with cooking on high, but if you are going to cook the entire suggested time, then you need to return to a slow cook about one-half way through the cooking time.
7. If a lot of moisture has gathered around the edges of the crock pot near the end of cooking time, remove the lid and cook for an additional 15-20 minutes to allow the liquid to evaporate.

8. Get to know your slow cooker. Test a recipe as to doneness with the suggested cooking time. Does it do what it says it will? If not, was it undercooked or overcooked? Once you have used your crock pot you will better understand the cooking times.
9. Always make sure your crock pot is clean, as well as the lid. Make sure no food is left on that can spoil and ruin your next dish.
10. Do not allow any meat/fish/fowl to sit out on the counter for any length of time while something else in the crock pot heats up. Know how to use an instant read thermometer to measure when things are properly cooked.
11. Don't skimp on aromatics. Slow cooking tends to mute flavors. That is why you will see hefty amounts of onions, garlic, dry herbs and other flavorful ingredients in recipes. And remember, to boost flavor, you can finish cooking with fresh herbs, lemons, limes, and other flavorful ingredients.
12. Most slow cookers have a hotter side (typically the back side that's opposite the controls) that can cause pastas, casseroles, and other dense dishes to burn. You can fix this with an aluminum foil collar wrapped around the back side of the cooker. Spray the collar with a non-stick cooking spray prior to starting your cooking to avoid sticking.
13. Know how to make a "sling" out of foil to remove items like meatloaf, salmon, and swordfish as well as some cakes from the cooker.
14. Skim away excess fat – during the long cooking time, meat will release fat into the stew or braise, but it is easy to remove it at the end of the cooking time. Simply turn off the cooker and let sit for a few minutes so the fat can rise to the top. Use a large spoon to skim the excess fat off the surface.
15. Temperature – The cooking temperature that will give you the most-tender meat is 180-degrees. This is equivalent to the LOW setting on almost all cookers and is the lowest temperature deemed safe for cooking by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
16. Please be careful handling the crock pot insert. Most are stoneware and have a glazed interior. You can facilitate cleaning by spraying the insert with a non-stick cooking spray. Once heated, the insert can stay hot - warm for many hours, so be very careful handling it. Never try to clean a hot insert with cold water. That can cause the insert to crack. Never place the insert over direct heat, nor try to freeze the insert. A cracked insert cannot and should not be used again. You can, with most crock pot manufactures, order a new insert if yours cracks. If you remove the insert, always put either a hot mitten or hot-plate under the insert when setting it down on the counter.

17. Remember, during cooking, the outside metal housing of the slow cooker will get hot, so be sure to keep children away from it. Also, keep anything flammable away from the cooker too.
18. Never preheat a crockery insert when empty. Load the crock with the ingredients, then turn-on the cooker or plug it in to start the heating process.
19. The cord on most slow cookers is deliberately short, to minimize danger from tangling or tripping. You may use a heavy-duty extension cord **ONLY** if it has a marked electrical rating at least as great as the electrical rating of your cooker.
20. Tender vegetables overcook easily, so add them during the last 30 to 60 minutes of cooking. The same goes for seafood.
21. If you are away from home during the entire cooking process and discover that the power has gone out, throw away the food even if it looks done. Bacteria can be breeding inside.
22. The crock can be washed by hand with nonabrasive dish-washing soap and a nylon “scrubby” or brush. You can use a damp towel and some kosher salt to remove baked on food from the insert.
23. Cold cooked food should not be reheated in the crockery insert as it will not reach a safe internal temperature quickly enough to render the food safe to eat. However, cooked food can be heated on the stove or in a microwave and then put into a preheated slow cooker to keep it hot until serving. To preheat the crockery insert, fill it with warm, not boiling, water and let it stand a few minutes. Pour out the water and dry the insert, and then add the reheated food.
24. When the food is cooked and ready to be served, turn the cooker to the OFF setting and/or unplug the unit. Many older slow cookers and small units do not have an OFF setting; OFF is when the unit is unplugged.
25. Finally, never immerse the metal housing of the slow cooker in water or fill it with liquid; you must always have the crockery insert in place to cook. To clean, let the base come to room temperature, then wipe inside and out with a damp sponge and dry with a towel so as not to damage the finish. Always make sure the bottom of the heating unit is clean and free of food particle or spillage.

You can contact Chef Cal at: chefcal007@yahoo.com

