

ABC's for Cooking in Your Slow Cooker

A... Always defrost meat or poultry before putting it into a slow cooker.

B... Begin by turning the cooker on the highest setting for the first hour of cooking time and then to LOW or the setting called for in your recipe. However, it is safe to cook foods on LOW the entire time.

C... Conversion Chart for Slow Cooker Timing

Conventional Oven Cooking Time	Slow Cooker (LOW)	Slow Cooker (HIGH)
15-30 minutes	4-8 hours	1½-3 hours
30-40 minutes	6-10 hours	3-4 hours
50 minutes-3 hours	8-18 hours	4-6 hours

D... Dairy products, like sour cream, milk or yogurt, tend to break down in slow cookers. To prevent this, add them during the last 15 minutes of cooking. (Shellfish easily overcook so add them during the last 15 to 30 minutes of cooking time.)

E... Equal size pieces of the same type of food result in more even and thorough cooking.

F... Fill cooker no less than half-full and no more than two-thirds full.

G... Garlic and chili powder as well as other flavorful spices will intensify during long slow cooking. Add just 25 to 65 percent of the called for amounts to balance the flavors.

H... High-moisture content foods such as chili, soups, stews or spaghetti sauces do well in the slow cooker.

I... If you are not at home during the entire slow-cooking process and the power goes out, throw away the food even if it looks done. If you are at home, finish cooking the ingredients immediately by some other means – on a gas stove, on an outdoor grill or at a house where the power is on.

J... Just arrange specialty dishes, such as stuffed chops or steak rolls, stuffed cabbage leaves, stuffed peppers, or baked apples in a single layer so they can cook easily and be served attractively.

K... Keep the lid on! Remove the lid only to check for doneness near the end of the cooking time. Each time the lid is removed, the temperature drops 10-15 degrees and the cooking process is slowed by 30 minutes.

L... Liquids such as broths, gravy, water or barbecue sauce should be used to cover the food in a slow cooker.

M... Make your slow cooker preparation faster by getting ingredients ready the night before and placing vegetables, seasoning and liquids in a dish and refrigerating. (Don't use the inner slow cooker liner, unless manufacturer's instructions indicate it is OK.) Also slice, cube or prepare meat, but keep it separate from other ingredients.

N...Never reheat food in a slow cooker. Instead, bring it to a boil on the stove, in the oven or microwave then place it in the slow cooker to keep warm.

O...Once food is done, it will stay safe in the slow cooker as long as it is left operating (on warm).

P...Pastas and rice may become pasty and starchy with the low temperature and long cooking method of a slow cooker. These items can be cooked separately and added to the finished dish.

Q...Quick clean up is possible with the removable ceramic liners, but don't put a hot liner in cold water...it may crack.

R...Reduce the amount of liquid used in most oven recipes when using the LOW setting since the slow cooker retains all moisture that usually evaporates when cooking in the oven. Reduce liquids by half – unless rice or pasta is an ingredient.

S...Store leftovers in shallow covered containers and refrigerate within two hours after cooking is finished.

T...Test your slow cooker for proper heating.

- Place 8 cups of tap water in cooker.
- Heat on LOW setting for 2 hours with lid on.
- Check water temperature with a thermometer. Do this quickly (see K above)
- Temperature should be 135° to 140°F.
- Replace lid and heat for 8 hours on LOW.
- Water temperature should be 185°F.

U...Usually, it is not necessary to brown meats and poultry before cooking in a slow cooker. The exception is ground meat. Browning is often recommended for flavor development.

V...Vegetables cook slower than meat and poultry in the slow cooker so if using them, put vegetables in first, at the bottom and around sides of the container.

W...Wash hands and begin with a clean cooker, clean utensils and a clean work area.

X...Excess liquid can be reduced and concentrated for great flavor. Remove meat and vegetables from the cooker, add cornstarch, tapioca or tapioca powder and cook on HIGH approximately 15 minutes to thicken.

Y...Your slow cooker is a great appliance to keep hot beverages warm for a prolonged time.

Z...Zesty citrus flavors can be enhanced by adding more product during the last 15-30 minutes of cooking.

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