

## Slow Cooker Tips

Nurture chooses to provide slow cooker recipes because of their easy and convenient usage. You can turn a few ingredients into a delicious meal with the flip of a switch. Simply assemble the food into the slow cooker, and forget about it until meal time. Here are some general tips for usage, as well as some ideas to help you come up with your own family favorites.



### **General Usage:**

- The slow cookers provided by Nurture are 6 quarts.
- There are 3 settings on the slow cooker: warm, low, and high. Warm will keep your food warm without cooking it, while low and high are cooking temperatures. In general, cooking a recipe on 'low' takes about twice the time it takes to cook on 'high'.
- After turning on the slow cooker, resist the urge to stir. The slow cooker is designed to be left alone, and every time you open the lid you add 15-20 minutes to the cook time.
- Drastic temperature changes can cause the slow cooker to crack. Don't place the hot cooking insert on a cold counter, or take a cold cooking insert out of the fridge and put it directly into preheated slow cooker.
- The steam inside the slow cooker will form condensation on the lid. When taking off the lid, lift it straight up (as opposed to tilting it) to keep the water from getting in the food. It will also be hot, so be careful doing this.
- When washing the slow cooker, use warm soapy water and non-abrasive cleaners that can scratch the stoneware. Also, make sure the slow cooker has completely cooled before washing to prevent cracking.

**STEPS FOR USE:**

1	Add foods according to your recipe. Always be sure there is liquid in the recipe. This could be salsa or other soft fruits or vegetables which have a lot of moisture.
2	Plug in slow cooker to safe outlet. (Attach plug to appliance first, then plug cord into the wall outlet).
3	Cover and turn on the slow cooker.
4	For animal proteins, use meat thermometer to check if done.*
5	Turn to "keep warm" if waiting to serve.

\*According to FoodSafety.gov, meats should be cooked to the following minimum temperatures:

Poultry: 165 degrees

Ground Meat: 165 degrees

Pork, Beef Steaks and Roasts, Lamb: 145 degrees

**You can make your own recipes too! Try writing new recipes or converting an old stove-top favorite to a slow cooker preparation. Here are some tips to help:**

**Vegetables and Meats**

- Softer vegetables like mushroom and zucchini can become mushy if cooked for too long. If possible, it is best to add them during the last 30-60 minutes of cooking time.
- Fresh root vegetables like potatoes and carrots take longer to cook than meats. To ensure even cooking, place these vegetables on the bottom of the slow cooker, followed by meat, then quicker-cooking items. (Items on the bottom cook at a slightly higher temperature than those on top.)
- Remove excess fat and skin from poultry and other meats before cooking. The added fat will make the liquids fatty and increase the cooking time of the meat, often making it dry.
- You can add a little oil, turn the slow cooker on high, and saute/brown items before adding the rest of the ingredients. Try doing this while having your morning coffee, then add the rest of the ingredients when you leave for the day 15-30 minutes later.
- Don't put frozen items into the slow cooker, thaw them in the refrigerator first. Frozen meat can be unevenly cooked and frozen vegetables can add unwanted liquid to the dish.

## Seasoning and Sauces

- Seasonings are best added at the end because the cooking process can dull them. If using dried seasonings, add them during the last hour or so of cooking time. If using fresh, add them right before serving.
- Liquids will not evaporate like they will when cooking stove top. If converting a recipe, reduce the amount of liquids added by about half.
- To thicken sauces, try either dredging the meat in flour before cooking or adding cornstarch at the end of cooking. Also, adding a can of beans mashed with the back of a fork can be a nice thickener.

## Other/General

- Cut everything (vegetable, meat, etc.) the same size so that each piece takes the same amount of time to cook.
- The slow cooker works best when filled half to two-thirds full.
- Pasta can become sticky when cooked in the slow cooker. If adding pasta like penne or spaghetti, it is better to cook it separately as the directions describe and add when finished. Small pastas (like orzo) can be cooked in the slow cooker, but should only be added during the last hour of cooking time to keep a good texture.
- Milk-based products can curdle in the slow cooker. When practical, add them at the end of the cooking process.
- Dried beans should be soaked before adding to the slow cooker. Also, salt, acids and sugar have a hardening effect on the beans, preventing them from softening. Add any sugars, salts or acids (like vinegar or lemon) after the beans are fully cooked.
- Cooking times vary depending on the individual recipe, but this table can be used as a jumping off point:

Stove Top/Oven Cook Time	Low Heat Setting	High Heat Setting
15-30 minutes	4-6 hours	1.5-2.5 hours
35-45 minutes	6-8 hours	3-4 hours
50 minutes to 3 hours	8+ hours	4-6 hours

# IMPORTANT SAFEGUARDS

**Safety First:** Please read the instructions manual/ user guide included with your slow cooker. It has important safety information you must review.

Use caution when opening, always open lid away from face, to avoid steam burns. Handle the cooking bowl carefully. Use oven mitts.

**When using electrical appliances, basic safety precautions should always be followed, including the following:**

- 1. Read all instructions carefully before use.**
2. Do not touch hot surfaces. Use handles and knobs.
3. To protect against electric shock, do not immerse cord, plug, or any parts of the slow cooker unit (except removable cooking bowl) in water or any other liquid.
4. Close supervision is necessary when this appliance is used by or near children.
5. Do not operate any appliance with damaged cord or plug, or after the appliance malfunctions or has been dropped or damaged in any manner. Return the slow cooker to the nearest authorized service station for examination, repair or electrical or mechanical adjustment.
6. The use of attachments not recommended or sold by the manufacturer may cause fire, electrical shock or injury, and are therefore prohibited.
7. Do not use outdoors.
8. Do not place on or near a hot gas or electric burner, or in a heated oven, or in a microwave oven.
9. Unplug from outlet when not in use and before cleaning. Allow to cool before putting on or taking off parts, and before cleaning.
10. Always attach plug to appliance first, then plug cord into the wall outlet. To disconnect, remove the plug. Always hold the plug, never pull the cord.
11. Do not let the cord hang over edge of table or counter, or touch hot surfaces, including the stove.
12. Extreme caution must be used when moving an appliance containing hot oil or other hot liquids.
13. Do not use this appliance for anything other than intended use.
14. To reduce the risk of electric shock cook only in removable container.
15. To ensure continued protection against risk of electric shock, connect to properly grounded outlets only.

## HOUSEHOLD USE ONLY ADDITIONAL SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS

### GROUNDING INSTRUCTIONS:

This appliance must be grounded. The plug must be plugged into an outlet that is properly installed and grounded.

### WARNING:

**Improper use of a grounded cord can result in the risk of electrical shock. Consult a qualified electrician if necessary. Do not try and defeat this safety feature by modifying the plug.**

A **short power-supply cord** is provided to reduce the hazards resulting from entanglement or tripping over a long cord.