For a fast evening meal...COOK SLOW!

When it debuted in 1971, the slow cooker was hailed as the busy mom’s little helper—the easiest, non-messy way to make a delicious family dinner. Rival introduced the invention under the trademarked name Crock-Pot.

**Benefits of slow cookers**
- It actually takes less electricity to use a slow cooker compared to an oven.
- It doesn’t heat up your house like an oven (an added bonus during hot summer months).
- Slow cookers are a great way to prepare inexpensive, lean cuts of meat.
- Other foods including soups, casseroles, beverages and cereals can also be prepared with a slow cooker.
- Liquids do not boil away as in conventional methods of cooking. Clean up is simple if the crock pot is stoneware and is removable.
- One-step preparation is convenient. Simply put all ingredients in the crock and cook.
- Simmered foods taste better than boiled foods because more natural juices and flavors of food are retained.

**Tips for Successful Slow Cooking**
- Spray the inside of the slow cooker with cooking spray for easy cleaning.
- Pre-warm the crock pot by filling with boiling water for a few minutes or pre-heating.
- Root vegetables take longer to cook than other vegetables. Cut these vegetables into small pieces and place in the bottom of the slow cooker.
- When time permits, brown pieces of meat before placing in the slow cooker. This adds extra flavor and allows excess fat to be removed.
- Cook and drain ground meats before adding to the slow cooker.
- When placing pieces of meat in the slow cooker, be sure there is space between the meat so the heat can circulate around the pieces.
- Don’t set a hot crock on a cold surface. Always place a hot pad or towel under it.
- To speed up cooking time of most recipes, including soups and stews, follow the rule that 1 hour on High is equal to 2 hours on Low.
- Steam accumulates on the slow cooker’s lid and the contents of the crock tend to get watered down. Use thickeners such as flour, cornstarch and tomato paste to give texture to the dish.
- Slow cooker plastic liners are disposable liners that fit most oval or round crocks. Toss the liner after serving and there’s no mess left behind to worry about.
Want More Money in Your Pocket?

If you’re eligible, you can get money just by mailing in a form!

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) lowers taxes and provides cash back to low and moderate income workers. There are two related programs – federal and Wisconsin.

Income guidelines vary by filing status, income, and number of children. For example, you may be eligible for the federal credit if you have income from a job which is below $48,279 (married with 3 or more children) or $18,440 (married with no children). You must be a US citizen; and have investment income of no more than $3,100.

Wisconsin’s EITC is available to most people who claimed the federal credit and had a child living with them in 2009. If you claim 3 or more children, your Wisconsin EITC is 43% of your federal credit.

You can qualify for the credit whether you owe taxes, or are owed a refund. You can even apply if you worked but don’t have to pay taxes.

You can find out if you may be eligible by contacting the ACCESS website at www.access.wisconsin.gov. Check out the Form 1040 instructions, page 48, for detailed steps or go to www.irs.gov/eitc and click on “EITC Assistant.” This service is available in English and Spanish.

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**Slow-Cooker Rice Pudding**

2 ½ cups cooked rice
1 can (12 oz) low-fat evaporated milk
3 Tablespoons margarine
2/3 cup brown sugar
3 eggs, beaten
2 teaspoons vanilla
1/4 cup raisins, optional
Cinnamon to taste

1. Lightly grease slow cooker.
2. Combine all ingredients in slow cooker.
3. Cover; cook on Low for 4 to 5 hours.
4. Stir twice during first 30 minutes.

Serves 4-6.

Source: Utah State University Cooperative Extension

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**GOAL:** Choose one of the following goals to work on. Personalize it and post it in a visible place as a reminder.

1. I will prepare a slow cooker meal with lean meat _____ times this week.
2. I will try a new recipe with vegetables in my slow cooker _____ times this month
3. I will look at options for purchasing a slow cooker or crock pot.

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WNEP education is supported by the USDA Food Stamp Program, UW-Extension and local partners. Food stamps can help provide a healthy diet. To find out more about food stamps or to learn more about the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program in your county, please contact:

**UW Extension Office**

Sturgeon Bay: (920) 746-5984
Kewaunee: (920) 388-7197