Cooking Information

My Favorite Pressure Cooker Recipes

Pressure cookers cook foods three to eight times faster than ordinary cookware, and foods are more nutritious and tasty because they are cooked quickly in a sealed environment and with little liquid. Water-soluble vitamins and minerals are not cooked away. The first pressure cooker debuted in the United States at the New York World’s Fair in 1939 and its promotional materials read as follows: “It’s an enclosed pot with a lid that locks to form an airtight seal that creates intense steam to cook foods in a much shorter period of time than a conventional saucepan. Since steam penetrates food easily under pressure, this new cooking process not only tenderizes foods more quickly, it also keeps the flavor and nutrients in the food rather than cooking them out, producing a tastier and healthier meal.”

Pressure cookers were the microwaves of the 1940’s and 1950’s due to the reduced cooking time they offered, but lost popularity when microwave ovens became available and affordable. During recent years, increased awareness of the importance of eating a healthier diet without having to spend hours cooking it to make it tasty has contributed to pressure cookers returning to popularity. For example, a four-pound beef pot roast with vegetables prepared at 350 degrees in the oven takes about 3 1/2 hours, while the same size beef pot roast and vegetables can be prepared in a pressure cooker in about 35-40 minutes. And it’s more nutritious prepared in the pressure cooker because the nutrients aren’t cooked out of the food.

For cooking meats in a pressure cooker, I believe using broth instead of water improves the flavor. When cooking beef I use beef broth and when cooking chicken or turkey legs and thighs I use chicken broth. I just buy the broth in a can or carton at the store. When I cook vegetables only I use water, but I often season with smoked turkey wings or necks or smoked pork. And if I have the time, rather than just put the smoked meat in the pressure pot to cook with the vegetables, I first boil the smoked meat in water to make a stock in which to cook the vegetables. I also like to use a little more liquid than the recipe book that comes with the pressure pot calls for, but not much more.

When the meat and vegetables are all in the pot, check to be sure the rubber seal on the lid is properly in place and use the wire to be sure the vent tube isn’t blocked. Then put on the lid and close it into place. Place the pressure regulator on the vent tube and press it down firmly so it snaps into place. Then put on the stove on high until the pressure begins to rock or jiggle. Cooking time begins when the pressure regulator begins to jiggle. Newer pots may have different controls which will be explained in their manual. If left on high, some pots may build dangerously high pressures. This happened to my mother in 1958 when she forgot to turn the heat down and the pot lid blew off the cooker and sailed upward, blowing a hole in the ceiling. I believe she said she got her pressure cooker in 1944. The pots made today are much safer.
Once the pressure regulator begins to jiggle, turn the heat down to maintain a steady rocking/jiggling of the pressure regulator. This is easier for me with gas stoves. If my memory serves me correctly, low medium or low usually produces an optimum temperature on electric stoves. If the pressure regulator stops jiggling, the heat is too low. If it jiggles very fast, it is too high. Once the cooking time is over, move the pot off the burner and release the steam. I just pop the pressure regulator off and let the steam hiss out until it stops, usually several minutes. However, the manuals say to use the safety lock release on the handle and release the steam slowly by pushing it in until all the steam has escaped.

**Meat’n Potatoes Beef Pot Roast**
1. 2-4 pound beef chuck or sirloin roast.
2. Baking potatoes whole, washed, peeled or unpeeled.
3. One or two large whole sweet onions, with outer layer of skin peeled off.
4. Whole mushrooms

Prepare vegetables as indicated. Cut the roast into about two to four large pieces that are about 2-3 inches thick each. Pour 24 ounces of beef broth in the pressure pot. Salt the broth, swirl the liquid in the pot to mix in the salt and taste it with a spoon. Add more salt if needed. When it is salted to taste, first add the meat, then the vegetables. Cook for 35-40 minutes after the pressure regulator begins to jiggle. Serve and enjoy.

**Beef Stew Dinner**
1. 2-4 pounds of beef stew meat cut into numerous chunks about one inch thick. This can be purchased as beef for stew already cut into chunks, or a larger piece of beef can be purchased and cut up. No cut of meat is too tough for a pressure cooker.
2. Potatoes, washed but unpeeled. If smaller ones are used (I like red new potatoes), they should be left whole. If larger baking type is used, they should be cut in half.
3. Whole carrots, peeled.
4. One whole sweet onion (for flavor), with outer layer of skin peeled off.

Prepare vegetables as indicated. Pour 24 ounces of beef broth in the pressure pot. Salt the broth to taste. First add the meat, then the vegetables. Cook for 20-25 minutes after the pressure regulator begins to jiggle. Serve and enjoy.

**Beef Brisket**
1. Fresh beef brisket cut into two to four large pieces
2. Whole sweet onion

Pour 20 ounces of beef broth in the pressure pot. Salt the broth to taste. Lightly salt the meat. Cook for 55 minutes after the pressure regulator begins to jiggle.

**Turkey Dinner**
1. Fresh turkey legs and/or thighs
2. Whole sweet potatoes, peeled
3. Rutabagas, peeled and cut into quarters

Prepare vegetables as indicated. Pour 24 ounces of chicken broth in pressure pot. Salt the broth to taste. Add the turkey, then the vegetables. Cook for 25-30 minutes after the pressure regulator jingles. Serve and enjoy.

**Chicken Dinner**
1. Fresh chicken, cut into quarters.
2. Sweet corn, shucked.
3. Whole carrots, peeled.

Prepare vegetables as indicated. Pour 24 ounces of chicken broth in pressure pot. Salt the broth to taste. Add chicken, then the vegetables. Cook for 20-25 minutes after the pressure regulator jiggles. Serve and enjoy.

**Mustard, Collard or Turnip Greens**
1. Fresh greens, cut into 3-4 inch lengths, cutting the leaves crosswise, not lengthwise.
2. Smoked turkey or pork neck bones

Boil the smoked neck bones in water salted to taste in a regular pot for 30-40 minutes. Then throw away smoked neck bones or put them aside to eat later with the greens. Pour the liquid from boiling the smoked neck bones into a measuring cup. Measure out 24 oz. of this liquid into the pressure pot. If you don’t have enough of the liquid created by cooking the neck bones, use fresh water to make up the difference. Taste this liquid and add salt if necessary, then add greens. Cooking time for greens is difficult to determine, because it depends on individual taste and age of the greens. For tender young greens about half their normal size that are thinned from a garden, 10 minutes after the pressure regulator jiggles is sufficient. For older, more mature greens, or those you buy at the supermarket, 15 minutes or more may be required, depending on how cooked you like them. I think collard greens take longer to cook than mustard or turnip greens. If you are in more of a hurry, just add the smoked neck bones into the pot first, then put in the greens and skip the step of cooking the neck bones alone to get the cooking stock.

**Rutabagas and Cabbage**
Pour 16 oz. water in pressure pot. Salt the water to taste. Cut the rutabagas and the cabbage into quarters and place in pot. Cook for 25 minutes after pressure regulator jiggles. Serve and enjoy.