



Ontario Home Economics Association

Ask a Professional Home Economist

For Immediate Release

Slow Cooker Winners

by Donna-Marie Pye, P.H.Ec.

Kitchen appliances come and go, but the slow cooker has stood the test of time. It's been almost a half century since this appliance made its way into our homes where it remains a 'must-have'.

Busy families, empty nesters, college students and newlyweds can each find a slow cooker to suit their individual needs. Useful for cooking a weeknight or company meal, the slow cooker can also streamline preparations for a holiday gathering, when oven space is at a premium. Raise soups, stews and braises to a higher level with a slow cooker. Who would have imagined that a pot designed to bake beans could be so versatile?

A breeze to use, slow cookers are time, cost and energy efficient. Stalwart and reliable, they require little or no tending and very little last minute cooking is required. Meats and poultry braise beautifully, resulting in exceptional pot roasts, savory stews and succulent ribs, chilies and curries. Beans, peas and lentils, which are inexpensive, filling and incredibly nutritious also benefit from long, slow cooking. And slow cookers offer a super way to cook in hot weather without heating up the kitchen.

My new cookbook *Canada's 300 Slow Cooker Winners* (Robert Rose, October 2010) features the best of North American regional cuisine as well as many globally inspired dishes developed for convenience. Most recipes serve 4 to 8, however, a chapter entitled *Slow Cooker Meals for Two* is dedicated to smaller 3- to 4-quart size cookers. No longer do you have to cut a recipe in half to enjoy tasty healthy meals for one or two. *Big-Batch Dinners for a Crowd* is a section devoted to 8 to 16 servings using convenient 6- to 7-quart slow cookers to make big batches with ease.

Here's a recipe to ensure a healthy family breakfast despite the daily rush. Using a slow cooker eliminates the stovetop surveillance and mess, plus the oatmeal can be kept warm for late risers.

Cherry Vanilla Irish Oatmeal

4-quart slow cooker, stoneware greased

4 cups vanilla-flavored soy milk	1 L
4 cups water	1 L
1 3/4 cups steel-cut or large-flake (old-fashioned) rolled oats	675 mL
1/2 cup dried cherries or cranberries	125 mL
2/3 cup pure maple syrup, divided	150 mL
1/2 tsp salt	2 mL
1/4 tsp ground allspice	1 mL

1/2 cup fresh or frozen blueberries, thawed if frozen (optional)	125 mL
1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)	125 mL

1. In prepared slow cooker stoneware, combine soy milk, water, oats, cherries, 1/2 cup (125 mL) of the maple syrup, salt and allspice.
2. Cover and cook on Low for 8 hours or overnight.
3. Turn off slow cooker and stir in remaining maple syrup. Add additional water, if necessary, to achieve desired thickness. If desired, serve garnished with blueberries and pecans.

Makes 4 to 6 servings

Tips

- There's no question that steel-cut oats are superior in flavor to instant oatmeal. You can simplify the extended cooking time, avoid the constant stirring and sticky pot to clean by using a slow cooker.
- If you find the oats a bit thick after cooking, just thin the mixture with a little extra soy milk or water.
- Soy milk stands up well to slow cooking, since it has been processed in such a way that it can withstand high temperatures. Skim and 2% milk tend to break down and curdle during long cooking.

Slow cooking has grown up, travelled the world and come home more sophisticated, capable of a broader variety of fresh flavors, cuisines, shapes and textures. Whether you are cooking for two or serving a crowd, ensure soul-satisfying meals with a slow cooker.

Donna-Marie Pye, P.H.Ec. is a Waterloo-based professional home economist, food writer, cooking school instructor and recipe developer. She is author of North American bestsellers, *Canada/America's Best Slow Cooker Recipes*, *The Best Family Slow Cooker Recipes* and *300 Slow Cooker Favorites* with over 500,000 slow cooker books in print, worldwide. She is a member of the Ontario Home Economics Association.

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