

If you like to step into the house and smell the aroma of a good meal wafting throughout every room and you like meat that is tender to the cut, then using a slow cooker is a practical option year round.

A slow cooker, or Crockpot as it is often known, is easy to assemble, easy to clean, and the recipes are generally straightforward. One of the primary benefits is to make the meal in the morning, and it's ready when you get home—even on a long day.

"I like to use a slow cooker for the convenience," says Beth Lageveen of West Lafayette. "I have a very busy schedule, and I feed my family every day." Lageveen received a slow cooker for a wedding gift that she used consistently for 27 years until she replaced it recently.

# Low & slow

For taste, economy and convenience nothing beats a slow cooker



Slow cookers are ideal for entertaining because the food can be prepared ahead of time and served warm for guests.

“If you are having a gathering, and you want to serve meatballs or other hors d’oeuvres, it’s nice to be able to put them on low and you always have warm food, which will make your guests happy,” says Laura Floyd of Mulberry.

While a slow cooker is often associated with making stews and soups, it has a broad range of applications to make dishes for each course of the meal.

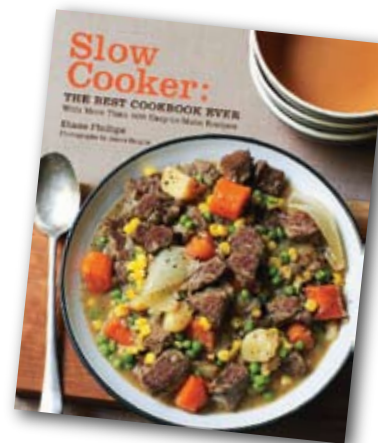
For example, you can do a cheesy dip for an appetizer, stuffed turkey breast for the main course, and lemon pudding cake for dessert, says Diane Phillips, author of *Slow Cooker: The Best Cookbook Ever with More than 400 Easy-to-Make Recipes* (Chronicle Books, \$24.95) in retail stores and online in October. Phillips is the author of 14

cookbooks and a traveling cooking instructor. She visits West Lafayette regularly where she teaches classes at KitchenArt.

“Using the slow cooker is wonderful, and it’s so simple. The slow cooker has a constant temperature, so it’s not like an oven where the temperature might fluctuate,” she explains. The book -- with its hundreds of recipes—has different ways to make every kind of meat and poultry to add variety to the repertoire for experienced slow cookers and inspiration to cooks who are just getting started.

The slow cooker has evolved from its original rudimentary bean pot, which was a ceramic pot on a type of aluminum heater, Phillips says. Rival trademarked the name Crockpot, and that is why the name Crockpot is synonymous with a slow cooker, but it is just one brand.

“If you buy a Cuisinart, an All-Clad, KitchenAid or any number of other brands, it will be labeled slow



You are sure to find a favorite recipe in this cookbook by Diane Phillips, due out in October.

cooker because those companies cannot call it a Crockpot because of the trademark,” explains Phillips. Slow cookers range vastly in price from the low end of about \$25 to about \$300. The high-end machines have more options, but the basic slow cooker does the job. ➤



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"I would look for one that is programmable because the beauty of a slow cooker is that you can turn it on in the morning, and when it's done, the machine will turn it to keep warm," she notes. "The food will be kept at safe temperature, but it won't overcook."

Also, shop for a slow cooker that suits your needs. A 5-quart to 7-quart machine would be adequate to serve a family of four to six. Smaller slow cookers are available as well, which are ideal for making appetizers and dips.

Phillips suggests placing the slow cooker on a countertop or other area in the kitchen, and not too close to any other equipment that heats up. The slow cooker does get hot, particularly at the bottom, so a layer of protection such as a trivet to put underneath the slow cooker is recommended.

"They are very safe pieces of equipment, but the one thing you don't want to do is put it on a stovetop."

The slow cooker does not emit heat the way a conventional oven does, however, which makes it a good alternative in the summer months as well. Similar to buying frozen food to cook for dinner in a conventional oven, food manufacturing companies offer prepared meals, specifically to be made in a slow cooker.

Whether you buy it prepared or make it yourself, the pace of the cooking is the same—slow, which yields more tender meat. Less expensive cuts of meat can fall off the bone and taste savory after a day in a slow cooker.

"You can get a pork shoulder roast on sale, put it in there, and make your own barbecue out of that by pulling off the pork and mixing it with your favorite sauce; or make a whole chicken in the slow cooker," Floyd says. ✽

The slow cooker is set up to cook while you are out of the house, but there is much joy to experience if you have a day to watch the process in progress: The aroma intensifies as each hour passes, creating more anticipation to taste the final product. Watch as the bubbles appear at the finale.

### Hot Dill and Swiss Dip

(Diane Phillips, author of *Slow Cooker: The Best Cookbook Ever with More than 400 Easy-to-Make Recipes*, Chronicle Books, \$24.95, available in October)

Serves 8. Excellent for dipping seafood or fresh veggies

- 2 medium sweet yellow onions, such as Vidalia, finely chopped
- 2 Tablespoons finely chopped dill
- 1½ cups mayonnaise
- 2 cups finely shredded Havarti cheese with dill
- 2 cups finely shredded Swiss cheese

Coat the inside of a 1½- to 3-quart slow cooker with non-stick cooking spray. In a bowl, combine all the ingredients until blended. Transfer to the slow cooker, cover and cook for 2 to 3 hours until bubbling. Serve the dip on the warm setting with cold cooked shrimp, crab claws or fresh vegetables.

### Meatballs with Sweet and Spicy Sauce

(Laura Floyd, Mulberry)

Make your favorite meatballs (using about 2 lbs. of ground beef). Brown meatballs in a skillet, but do not thoroughly cook them. Set aside.

Combine the following ingredients directly in the slow cooker:

- 12 ounces of grape jelly
- 1 12-ounce jar of chili sauce

Mix ingredients. Use low heat for sauce, and place meatballs in the slow cooker to combine the flavor. Simmer in the slow cooker.

### Easy Pot Roast

(Beth Lageveen, West Lafayette)

- Chuck or pot roast (3–5 lbs.)
- 4-6 potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
- 1-2 onions, sliced
- 3 cups baby carrots or six large carrots, peeled and cut into sticks
- Salt, pepper, and garlic powder to taste
- 1/2 cup of water

Season the roast with the salt, pepper and garlic powder. Put the roast on the bottom of the slow cooker. The meat can be frozen or thawed, (browning is optional).

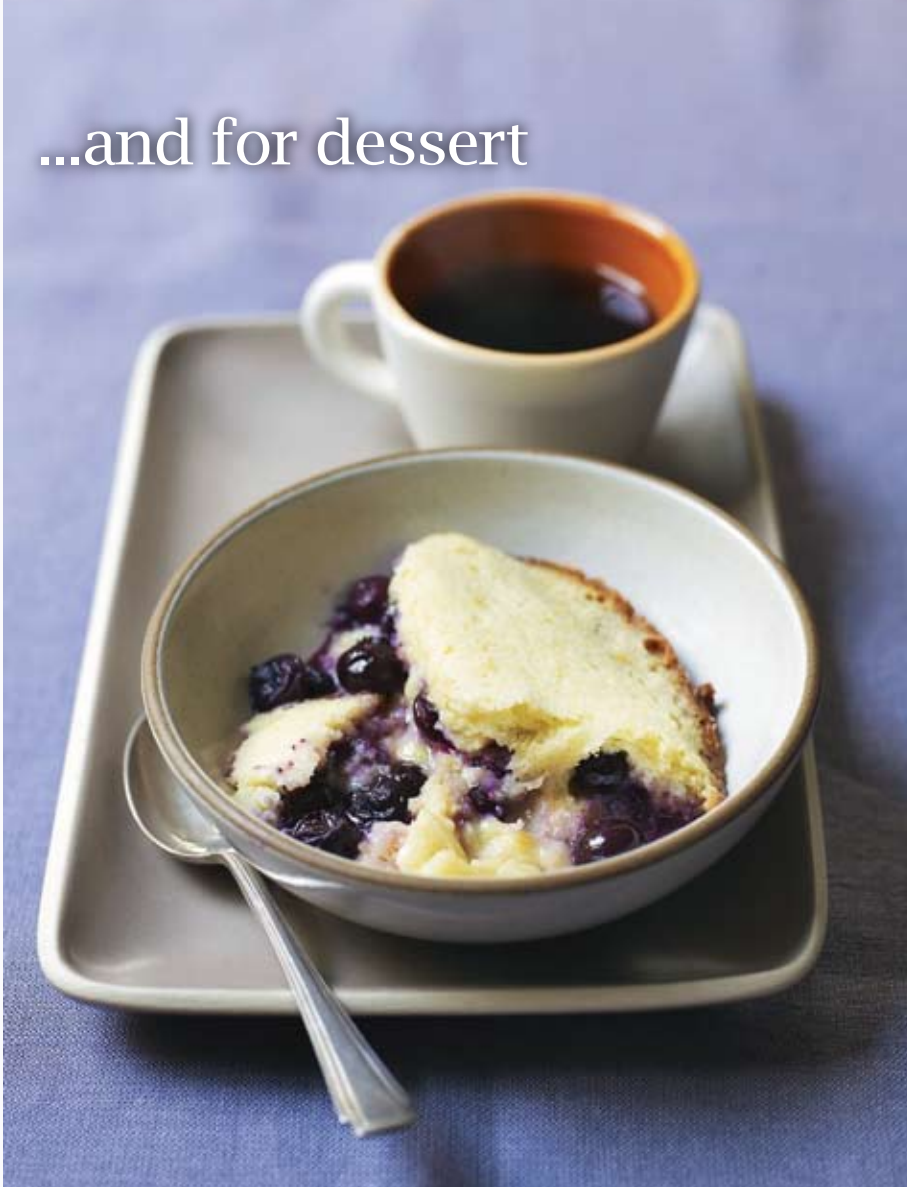
Place the peeled potatoes, carrots and onions on top of the roast. Season vegetables with salt, pepper and garlic powder. Put water in slow cooker.

Cook on low for 6-10 hours depending on whether the meat is frozen. Cooking times vary among slow cookers.

# Comfort food...



...and for dessert



**Hot Lemon Blueberry Pudding Cake**  
(Diane Phillips)

Serves 6


- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- 4 large eggs, separated
- Grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
- 4 Tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 12/3 cups milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/8 teaspoon salt

Coat the insert of a 5- to 7-quart slow cooker with non-stick cooking spray. Spread the berries over the bottom of the slow cooker insert.

Beat the egg whites in a large mixing bowl until soft peaks form and set aside. Whisk the egg yolks in another mixing bowl.

Add the zest and juice, butter and milk and whisk until blended. Stir together the sugar, flour and salt in another bowl, and add the egg yolk mixture. Beat until smooth, and then fold into the reserved egg whites.

Transfer the batter to the slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 2 1/2 hours. Allow the cake to cool slightly before serving.



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