

Crockery Cookery



One of the easiest and most helpful things you can do as you set your sights to the Whole Food Plant Based Diet which has so many benefits for your health, is to get initiated into the mysteries of the Crock Pot. People who use them delight in them and those who don't are often intimidated thinking that it must be something complicated, but really, it is so very simple.

Back in Granny's day she used to do the same thing by setting a pot of soup, beans or something on the back of the old cook-stove away from the main heat, where it would slowly steep and simmer for hours, resulting in such rich flavored soups, stews, and bean dishes.

A good place to acquire assorted crock-pots is at garage and rummage sales; they seldom stop working and even older models usually work well. A medium sized one with at least 2 settings "high and low" is good to learn on but once you have used these handy gadgets you may want various sizes and maybe some of the fancy ones with timers and 'keep warm' settings.

Tips and Tricks

>To make your high setting on your pot even hotter, place a folded tea-towel on top of it. Keep a close watch though as this increases the cooking speed a lot and your food may dry out or get scorched on the sides. There is little danger of the towel getting scorched as it will not get that hot; most I have tried just reach to the boiling point. Using the towel trick on the low setting will give you sort of a medium setting.

>Smaller sized and medium pots are good for warming up a precooked dish, such as a casserole, prior to serving without the danger of burning the food. The crock can be used as the serving dish and leftovers can be refrigerated in the crock as well, thus cutting down the number of dishes used in cooking and serving.

Crock your Rice: I mostly use brown rice and I take a cup and rinse it well under the tap in a sieve; then dump it into your crock pot turned to high. If you wish to, you then throw in a teaspoon of salt and one of olive oil. You boil the required amount of water on your stove—Brown rice is usually 3 cups to one of rice but other types of rice may vary and you can read the package. Pour the boiling water over your rice and stir well—put the lid on and top with a folded T-Towel. The rice usually cooks in about an hour. Most grains can be done the same way including whole-flake Oatmeal and other hot cereals.

Crocking Beans: Soaking beans or other dried legumes overnight is good for ease of digestion but it is not essential. If you do, then strain off the water and rinse them; if not rinse your dry beans, then throw them into your pot set on high and add boiling water 3 cups to one cup beans is about right for baked beans but you can add more water to create bean soups. Seasonings you can add are sea salt; sun-dry tomatoes, or for soup a can of tomatoes can be added; a small amount of olive oil, dried or fresh crushed garlic; dried or chopped fresh onion; Small amount Indian Masala and tumeric; and any other herbs you fancy. Cooking time will vary; large beans not soaked take a long time and can be left all day as long as there is enough water to keep them from drying out. If you are going to be away for several hours, leave the pot on low. Soaked beans do cook faster and lentils cook almost the same time as rice using the rice method.

Crocking Squash and Yams: for Squash, Wash them well cut them up and place in crock pot with 4-6 oz. water. Cook on high with cover for 2-3 hours until soft. Butternut squash can be then thrown into a blender or food processor and whizzed into 'pumpkin sauce' seeds and all! Talk about Whole food! You can add a little salt and pumpkin spice to taste and serve in soup bowls.

The darker squashes usually need to be peeled and seeds removed once they are cooked. Serve on the half shell or scoop out and serve as a side dish.

Yams should be peeled and diced—and done the same way as Butternut squash.