**What’s For Dinner?: In the Crockpot**

**Crock Pot Cheeseburger Soup**

Serves 8

4 small potatoes, peeled and diced

1 small white or yellow onion, chopped

1 cup shredded carrots

1/2 cup diced celery

1 teaspoon dried basil

1 teaspoon dried parsley

3 cups chicken broth

1 pound lean ground beef

3 Tablespoons butter

1/4 cup all-purpose flour

2 cups milk (I use 2%)

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1 (16 oz.) package Velveeta processed cheese, cubed OR 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

Place potatoes, onions, carrots, celery, dried basil and parsley in a large crock pot. Pour chicken broth over vegetables. Cover with lid. Cook on low heat 6 to 8 hours OR on high heat 4 to 5 hours or until potatoes are tender.

About 45 minutes before serving, cook and crumble ground beef in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Drain any grease. Pour cooked ground beef into crock pot. Carefully wipe out hot skillet with a paper towel then add butter. When butter is melted, whisk in flour and cook until golden brown and bubbly (about 1 minute.) Whisk in the milk, salt and pepper. Pour mixture into the crock pot and stir to combine everything.

Add the cubed Velveeta cheese or shredded cheese to crock pot. Stir again. Cover with lid and cook another 30 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve and enjoy!

**SLOW COOKER BEEF AND ONION RAGU (PASTA GENOVESE)**

INGREDIENTS:

For the Sauce:

1 (1-to 1¼-pound) boneless beef chuck roast, trimmed and cut into 1½-inch pieces  
2 teaspoons salt, divided  
1 teaspoon black pepper, divided  
2 pounds yellow onions, chopped coarse  
2 ounces pancetta, chopped coarse  
2 ounces salami, chopped coarse  
1 small carrot, peeled and chopped  
1 small celery rib, chopped  
⅓ cup (80 ml) dry white wine  
⅓ cup (80 ml) water  
4 tablespoons olive oil, divided  
2 tablespoons tomato paste  
1 tablespoon dried oregano

For the Pasta:  
1 pound rigatoni  
1 tablespoon salt  
2 ounces Pecorino Romano cheese, grated (1 cup)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Sprinkle the beef with 1 teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper and place in the bottom of a 6-quart slow cooker.

2. Pulse the onions in a food processor until finely minced, about 15 pulses, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Transfer the onions to a large bowl and stir in ¼ teaspoon salt. Cover and microwave for 5 minutes. Drain onions in a fine-mesh strainer, pressing with a rubber spatula to extract excess liquid. Return the drained onions to the now-empty bowl.

3. Process the pancetta, salami, carrot and celery in the now-empty food processor until ground to a paste, about 45 seconds, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Transfer the pancetta mixture to the bowl with the onions. Stir the wine, water, 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, tomato paste, oregano, ¾ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper into the onion mixture until thoroughly combined.

4. Pour the onion mixture over the beef in the slow cooker, covering the beef with the mixture. Cover and cook until the beef is fully tender, 8 to 9 hours on low (or 5 to 6 hours on high).

5. Bring 4 quarts of water to a boil in a large pot. Add the pasta and 1 tablespoon of salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Reserve ½ cup of the cooking water, then drain pasta.

6. Using a potato masher, mash the meat until coarsely shredded into bite-size pieces. Stir in the Romano cheese and the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil. Transfer the pasta to the slow cooker and stir to combine with the sauce. If too thick, thin the sauce with the reserved cooking water as needed. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

**Slow Cooker Cinnamon Sugar Butternut Squash**

3-4 pound butternut squash

½ cup butter (1 stick)

¾ cup packed brown sugar

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

¼ tsp. ground nutmeg

1 pinch ground cloves

1 dash salt

Peel the squash, cut into squares and discard seeds.

Place the squash into the slow cooker. Cut the butter in to slices. Place the butter pats all over the cut squash. In a small bowl mix together the brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and salt. Sprinkle this mixture over the squash and butter.

Cover and cook on HIGH for 3 hours without opening the lid during the cooking time. Serve and enjoy!

**Slow Cooker French Onion Soup**

6 tablespoons butter

4 large yellow onions, sliced and separated into rings

1 tablespoon white sugar

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 cup cooking sherry

7 cups reduced-sodium beef broth

1 teaspoon sea salt, or to taste

1/4 teaspoon dried thyme

1 bay leaf

8 slices of French bread

1/2 cup shredded Gruyere cheese

1/3 cup shredded Emmental cheese

1/4 cup freshly shredded Parmesan cheese

2 tablespoons shredded mozzarella cheese

Heat butter in a large, heavy pot over medium-high heat; cook and stir onions until they become translucent, about 10 minutes. Sprinkle onions with sugar; reduce heat to medium. Cook, stirring constantly until onions are soft and browned, at least 30 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.

Stir sherry into onion mixture and scrape bottom of pot to dissolve small bits of browned food from the pot. Transfer onions into a slow cooker and pour in beef broth. Season to taste with sea salt; stir in thyme and bay leaf. Cover cooker, set on High, and cook 4 to 6 hours. If desired, set on Low and cook 8 to 10 hours.

About 10 minutes before serving, set oven rack about 8 inches from the heat source and preheat the oven's broiler. Arrange bread slices on a baking sheet.

Broil bread slices until toasted, 1 to 2 minutes per side.

Combine Gruyere, Emmental, Parmesan, and mozzarella cheeses in a bowl, tossing lightly. Fill oven-safe soup crocks 3/4 full of onion soup and float a bread slice in each bowl. Top with about 2 tablespoons of cheese mixture per serving.

Place filled bowls onto a baking sheet and broil until cheese topping is lightly browned and bubbling, about 2 minutes.

**Zesty Slow Cooker BBQ Chicken**

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| 4 to 6 boneless skinless chicken breasts  1 (12-oz) bottle BBQ sauce  3/4 cup Italian dressing  1/4 cup brown sugar  2 Tbsp Worcestershire sauce  Place all ingredients in a 6-qt slow cooker. Cover and cook on LOW for 6 to  8 hours or HIGH for 3 to 4 hours. |
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