

Set it and Forget it: Healthy Winter Slow Cooker Recipes

by Sarah Muntel, RD

The days are getting cooler and shorter, signaling the season for warm, hearty meals. During the winter months, people often turn to soups, stews and casseroles as staples in their meal plans. There's nothing quite like coming home to a warm, comforting meal or enjoying the aroma of a hearty stew simmering all day.

What Are the Benefits of a Slow Cooker?

There are many benefits! First, on busy days, having a tasty, ready-to-eat meal waiting in the slow cooker is unbeatable. Slow cooker meals can also help you stick to your healthy eating plan. With just a little planning the night before, you can enjoy a nutritious meal the next day and avoid the temptation of fast food. Finally, slow cooker dishes can be a one-pot solution to meet all your nutritional needs. Protein, vegetables and grains can all come together in one delicious meal.



Slow Cooker Checklist:

- Choose recipes that fit your schedule. Cooking times typically range from four to eight hours, and many slow cookers come with timers for added convenience.
- Look for recipes with a variety of healthy ingredients. These may include lean proteins, vegetables, low-fat dairy and whole grains.
- Don't hesitate to substitute. Modify recipes to suit your needs. Add extra vegetables to soups, stews or casseroles. Swap out high-calorie ingredients like full-fat dairy for lower-fat alternatives, such as plain Greek yogurt instead of sour cream, or whole-grain options instead of white rice or pasta.
- Expand your options beyond dinner. Slow cookers are versatile and can be used for breakfast, lunch, dinner and even appetizers.

Breakfast

Breakfast is often called the most important meal of the day, and a healthy breakfast can set you off on the right foot. Since mornings can be hectic, slow cookers make things easier. Whether it's a busy workday, a sports-filled morning or a leisurely weekend, warm slow-cooked breakfasts are a great choice. Try hearty, whole-grain oats topped with fruit and yogurt or a protein-rich egg casserole loaded with vegetables.



Slow Cooker Steel Cut Oats

Recipe from skinnytaste.com

Ingredients:

- 1 cup quick-cooking steel-cut oats (e.g., Bob's Red Mill)
- 2 cups water
- 1 tbsp. pure maple syrup (plus extra for serving)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup egg whites
- 2 cups mixed fresh berries (e.g., blueberries, blackberries, raspberries)
- 1 medium ripe banana, sliced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped pecans or walnuts

Directions:

1. Spray the slow cooker with oil to prevent sticking. Combine oats, water, maple syrup, cinnamon and egg whites. Stir to mix.
2. Add the berries and banana on top.
3. Cover and cook on low for two hours.
4. Serve with pecans and optional maple syrup.

Lunch and Dinner:

Slow cooker meals are game-changers for busy evenings. Take time to find a few family favorites to include in your weekly menu. These meals not only add variety but also save you hours during your busiest times of the day.



Crock Pot Enchilada Soup

Recipe from *delish.com*

Ingredients:

- ½ of an onion, finely chopped
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 (19-oz) can red enchilada sauce
- 1 (28-oz) can fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- 1 (15-oz) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15-oz) can corn, drained and rinsed
- 2 lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into thirds
- 2 ½ cups chicken broth
- 1/3 cup cheddar cheese (plus extra for serving)
- ¼ cup heavy cream

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients except cheese and cream in the slow cooker. Stir to mix.
2. Cook on high for three hours or until the chicken is tender.
3. Remove chicken, shred and return it to the pot. Stir in cheese and cream until melted.
4. Serve with sour cream, crushed tortilla chips, lime slices and extra cheddar.

Appetizers and Dips:

Slow cookers are perfect for appetizers, whether for a casual afternoon at home or an evening gathering. Warm, flavorful dips are always a hit and require minimal effort.



Healthy Slow Cooker Spinach Artichoke Dip

Recipe from *tasty.com*

Ingredients:

- 8 oz. reduced-fat cream cheese
- ¼ cup nonfat Greek yogurt
- 2 cups canned artichoke hearts, drained and chopped
- 2 cups frozen spinach
- 1 cup low-fat mozzarella cheese

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in the slow cooker and stir until well mixed.
2. Cook on high for four hours or until the cheese is melted.
3. Serve and enjoy!

This winter, make meal prep easier with a variety of warm, hearty dishes your family will love. A slow cooker lets you save time in the kitchen while still serving nutritious, flavorful meals. From comforting stews and casseroles to protein-packed breakfasts and snacks, there's something for everyone!

With a little planning, you'll spend less time cooking and more time on what matters—whether it's enjoying family time, embracing winter activities or simply relaxing. Let your slow cooker do the work so you can focus on making the most of the season.

About the Author:

Sarah Muntel, RD is a registered dietitian who has worked with surgical and medical weight loss patients for more than 20 years. She loves helping people reach their health and wellness goals! In her free time, Sarah enjoys spending time with her husband and children, watching her children's activities and going on walks with friends.



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



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Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
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