

From Ronda's Front Porch to Yours

Ronda White

Fast Food Meals Slow Cooker Style

Springtime proves to be one of the busiest times of the year. Do you find that your calendar always seems to be full most nights of the week making it a challenge to put a healthy meal on the table? With a busy lifestyle, fast food may seem like the easiest and most convenient option for our families; however, it may not be the healthiest of choices.

The use of a slow cooker can make putting a hot meal on the table a reality. Simply put ingredients in your slow cooker, set the temperature and without too much effort dinner is served. Just by knowing a few simple steps will help you be on your way to transforming family meal time.

Besides avoiding the fast food lines there are many benefits to using a slow cooker. They can be used throughout the year and will not heat your kitchen which is a benefit for the summertime. It can even save a little on the electric bill as they use less electricity than an oven. Slow cooking recipes with meat can help tenderize less-expensive cuts of meat, whereas they may be tough when cooked other ways. Using a slow cooker usually is quicker than preparing a regular recipe as you can add everything at one time, set it and forget about it. Also a variety of foods can be cooked in a slow cooker to include roasts, side dishes, casseroles, breads and even dessert.

You do not have to use a recipe that was created just for the slow cooker. Most of your favorite recipes can be converted to cooking in your slow cooker. Because liquids do not boil away in a slow cooker, in most cases, you can reduce liquids by one-third to one-half. In soups this does not matter. Add pasta at the end of the cooking process or it may become mushy. You may also want to cook pasta separately and add it just before serving. Milk, cheese and cream may be added one hour before serving. To convert the cooking times use the following recommendations:

<u>Standard Cooking Time</u>	<u>Cook on Low</u>	<u>Cook on High</u>
15 to 30 minutes	4 to 6 hours	1 ½ to 2 hours
35-45 minutes	6 to 10 hours	3 to 4 hours
50 minutes to 3 hours	8 to 16 hours	4 to 6 hours

A few mealtime favorites in our family are chicken fried chops and creamy corn. I hope your family enjoys these recipes also.

Chicken Fried Chops

½ c. all-purpose flour

2 t. salt

½ t. garlic powder

6 pork loin chops, trimmed

2 T. Vegetable oil

1 can (10 ¾ oz.) condensed cream of mushroom soup

1/3 c. water

Directions: In a shallow bowl, combine flour, salt and garlic powder, dredge pork chops. In a skillet, brown the chops on both sides in oil. Place in a slow cooker. Combine soup and water, pour over chops. Cover and cook on low for 6-8 hours or until meat is tender. If desired, thicken pan juices and serve with pork chops.

Creamy Corn

2 each 10 oz. pkg. corn, frozen

8 oz. cream cheese, cubed

¼ c. butter, diced

6 T. water

1 jalapeno, chopped, optional

Place all ingredients in a greased slow cooker or slow cooker liner. Cover and cook on low setting for 4 hours, stirring occasionally. * For a healthier version, use light or fat-free cream cheese.

For more recipes or tips on slow cooking, contact our Scurry County Extension Office at 325-573-5423.

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