



# SLOW COOKING ON A BUDGET

Tips, Pricing, and Recipes

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# Tips and Tricks

- Price check your local stores – these are helpful apps:
  - Our Groceries allows you to sync grocery lists with others
  - Flipp compares weekly ads so you can find the best deals
  - Ibotta helps you to earn cash back on your shopping
- Have a shopping list before you go shopping and **never** go shopping hungry
- Buy closeout items when possible (if you are going to be using them before expiration)
- Buying in bulk is not always cheaper – check prices per ounce or pound
  - Know how much you need of everything and don't buy extra unless you will use it!
  - Talk to your butcher in store about getting smaller portions of meat instead of packages
- Remember how much food you need for the number of people you are feeding.

Food Item	Serving Size
Chicken	½ pound chicken = 2 servings
Ground Beef	1 lb ground beef = 4 servings
Pork	1 lb pork = 4 servings
Grains (Rice, Quinoa, Lentils, etc.)	1 C cooked grains (⅓ - ½ cup uncooked) = 2 servings

- Store coupon policies:
  - Kroger: Coupon is at face value; any excess can be applied to your cart, but not given back as cash. Limited to 5 coupons for like-items, 1 coupon per item limit. (<https://www.smithsfoodanddrug.com/topic/coupon-policy>)
  - Walmart: No coupon limits for items, excess can be applied to your cart and given back as cash. Coupon is at face value. Will not take digital coupons; must be printed. (<https://corporate.walmart.com/policies>)
  - Sprouts: Will only take one coupon per item. Coupon is at face value; no excess is allowed. Printed coupons must be able to scan. (<https://www.sprouts.com/faq/>)
- Pay attention to how you store your food to reduce waste
  - FIFO: First In, First Out
  - If freezing foods, know how to properly wrap/cover/preserve foods to prevent freezer burn and spoilage
- Your nose knows: if something smells off, don't use it!
- When using a slow cooker, typically meats are cooked 4-6 hours on high, or 6-8 hours on low.
  - Budget your cooking time
  - Try not to leave slow cooker unattended on high for long periods of time (fire hazard)
  - Slow cooker liners can help with cleanup

# How to Dress Up Simple Dinners & Foods

- Macaroni and Cheese variations
  - Add in some chopped bacon, ham, or beef
  - Add in mixed vegetables (canned, fresh, or frozen)
  - Add in Lemon Pepper
  - Add in some pumpkin puree and nutmeg (omit cheese powder for this variation)
  - Substitute a different cheese for the cheese powder (Gouda and Parmesan are great)
- Ramen Noodle Dinner
  - Substitute the flavor packet with a spoonful of Miso or curry paste
  - Add an egg in for a poor man's version of Egg Drop Soup
  - Add in some vegetables (canned, fresh, or frozen)
  - Add in some soy sauce
  - Pan fry or broil it in some oil to give it a bit more crunch
  - Add in some meat (chicken, beef, or even tofu)
- Canned Green Beans
  - Boil over high heat with water from the can and 1 tsp. beef bouillon
  - Drain water from can, fry up some bacon, and heat up the beans with the bacon grease
  - Add a few Tbsp. butter, some onion powder, salt, and pepper and simmer until all the liquid evaporates. The butter and spices will stick to the beans.
  - Mix in a small amount of sugar (about 1 tsp. per can) and heat through
- Canned Corn
  - Add in some butter, garlic, parsley, salt, and pepper and heat through
  - Drain and rinse the corn and add some sugar, salt, milk, butter, and cream cheese to it. Cook on high 3 hours, or low 6 hours. Stir halfway through.
  - Caramelize it by adding some sliced onions and a little oil to it. Cook until all liquids evaporate.

*Black Bean and Corn Salsa Chicken – 4 servings*

Recipe by: Six Sisters ([www.sixsistersstuff.com](http://www.sixsistersstuff.com))

Needed Ingredients	Smith's Price	Walmart Price	Sprouts Price	Harmons Price
<i>1 can black beans</i>	\$ .65 each	\$ .55 each	\$ .89 each	\$ .99 each
<i>1 can corn</i>	\$ .59 each	\$ .62 each	\$ 1.19 each	\$ .79 each
<i>1 Tbsp Taco Seasoning</i>	\$ .39/package \$ .31/oz	\$ .67/package \$ .67/oz	\$ 1.29/package \$ 1.29/oz	\$ .99/package \$ .79/oz
<i>½ Cup Salsa</i>	\$ 1.39/16 oz jar \$ .09/oz	\$ 2.48/16 oz jar \$ .16/oz	\$ 2.69/16 oz jar \$ .17/oz	\$ 3.29/16 oz jar \$ .21/oz
<i>1/3 cup water</i>	---	---	---	---
<i>1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breast</i>	\$ 2.99/pound	\$ 1.78/pound	\$ 3.49/pound	\$ 4.99/pound
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$6.01</b> <b>\$1.50/serving</b>	<b>\$6.10</b> <b>\$1.52/serving</b>	<b>\$9.55</b> <b>\$2.39/serving</b>	<b>\$11.05</b> <b>\$2.76/serving</b>

Optional Ingredients	Smith's Price	Walmart Price	Sprouts Price	Harmons Price
<i>Tortillas- Flour Corn</i>	\$ 1.49/pack of 10 \$ 1.59/pack of 30	\$ 1.63/pack of 10 \$ 1.62/pack of 30	\$ 2.49/pack of 10 \$ 2.39/pack of 30	\$ 2.19/pack of 10 \$ 2.19/pack of 30
<i>Tortilla Chips</i>	\$ 1.00/bag \$ .10/oz	\$ .92/bag \$ .07/oz	\$ 1.99/bag \$ .17/oz	\$ 3.19/bag \$ .20/oz
<i>Shredded Cheese</i>	\$ 2.49/8 oz bag \$ .31/oz	\$ 1.88/8 oz bag \$ .24/oz	\$ 3.99/8 oz bag \$ .50/oz	\$ 2.69/8 oz bag \$ .34/oz
<i>Sour Cream</i>	\$ 1.39/16 oz carton \$ .09/oz	\$ 1.00/16 oz carton \$ .06/oz	\$ 1.49/16 oz carton \$ .09/oz	\$ 1.59/16 oz carton \$ .10/oz
<i>Avocado</i>	\$ 1.25 each	\$ .98 each	\$ 1.25 each	\$ 2.50 each
<i>Iceberg Lettuce</i>	\$ 1.49/head	\$ 1.28/head	\$ 1.29/head	\$ 1.74/head
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$6.62</b> <b>\$1.65/serving</b>	<b>\$5.80</b> <b>\$1.45/serving</b>	<b>\$12.40</b> <b>\$3.10/serving</b>	<b>\$13.90</b> <b>\$3.47/serving</b>

Instructions:

Dump all needed ingredients into your slow cooker and cook on low 6-7 hours or on high for 4-5 hours. After it's finished cooking, use two forks to shred the chicken. Serve however you want: by itself, in tacos or burritos, over nachos, etc. You can also garnish with cheese, sour cream, avocado, lettuce, etc.

## Garlic Parmesan Chicken Stew – 2 servings

Recipe by: *The Recipe Rebel* ([www.thereciperebel.com](http://www.thereciperebel.com))

### Ingredients:

1 medium Russet Potato  
1 boneless, skinless chicken breast  
1 stalk Celery  
¼ Cup frozen Chopped Onion  
1 large carrot, chopped  
1 small clove Garlic, minced  
⅓ tsp dried Parsley  
1 tsp Thyme  
1 pinch Black Pepper  
1 Cup Chicken Broth  
¼ Cup Milk  
1 ¼ Tbsp. Corn Starch  
3 Tbsp. Parmesan Cheese

### Instructions:

Add potatoes, chicken, celery, onion, carrots, garlic, salt, parsley, thyme, pepper, and broth to a 4-6 quart slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours or until chicken is cooked through and potatoes are tender. Set slow cooker to high. Stir together milk and corn starch and stir into slow cooker, along with Parmesan cheese. Cover and cook another 30 minutes or until thickened. Can be served with a side of bread for dipping.

## Slow Cooker Pork Tenderloin with Honey Balsamic Glaze – 4 servings

Recipe by: *The Recipe Rebel* ([www.thereciperebel.com](http://www.thereciperebel.com))

### Ingredients:

1 lb pork tenderloin  
1 tsp. garlic powder  
1 tsp. parsley flakes  
½ tsp. salt  
¼ tsp. pepper  
¼ tsp. onion powder  
¼ tsp. paprika  
1/3 cup low sodium chicken broth  
2 Tbsp. honey  
3 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar  
1 Tbsp. ketchup  
2 tsp. corn starch

### Instructions:

1. If your pork tenderloin is longer than your slow cooker, cut it in half crosswise (so you have two shorter pieces that will fit inside).
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the broth, honey, balsamic vinegar, ketchup and corn starch and pour into the slow cooker.
3. In a small bowl, combine garlic, parsley, salt, pepper, onion powder and paprika. Rub over all sides of the pork tenderloin and place in the slow cooker (I use a 2.5 quart oval slow cooker).
4. Cover and cook on high for 1.5-2 hours, or low for 4 hours, until a meat thermometer inserted in the thickest part reads 150-160 degrees F.
5. Move tenderloin from the slow cooker to a cutting board and let rest for 5 minutes before slicing. If desired, add additional corn starch and water to the juices to thicken further. Serve.

## Loaded Baked Potato Soup – 5 servings

Recipe by: The Typical Mom (temeculablogs.com)

### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 c ham cubed
- 5 red potatoes diced, skinned or partly skinned (can also use a different potato)
- 1 1/2 c cheddar cheese shredded
- 2 cans cream of mushroom soup (could use cream of potato soup too; this is my preference)
- 2 tbsp bacon bits
- 1 c sour cream
- 1 1/2 c milk (you can use a little more or less; depending on how thick you like it)
- 1 tbsp chives topping

### Instructions:

6. Dice potatoes and add them to the crockpot with your cans of cream of mushroom soup, bacon bits and ham. Stir well so all is combined.
7. Let this cook on low for 6-8 hours or on high for 4-6 hours.
8. 30 min. before serving, add your milk, cheese, and sour cream. Stir and put top back on for about 30 minutes so cheese can melt.

## Slow Cooker Yogurt – Servings vary

I typically use my Instant Pot to make yogurt, but I recently learned you can make it in a slow cooker too! The amount you can make will vary depending on the size of slow cooker you have. The time will also depend on how hot your slow cooker is. Here are the things you will need for it:

- Milk (at least ½ gallon)
- ½ cup yogurt culture (any brand will work, as long as it reads that it has live, active cultures)
- A food thermometer

Pour your milk into the slow cooker and cook on low. Check your milk after about an hour and a half. You want the milk to be at about 180 degrees. It needs to scald before you can proceed to kill any bacteria that you don't want in your yogurt. If it hasn't reached 180 degrees yet, keep your slow cooker on low and check every 15-20 minutes until it reaches 180 degrees. Once you know how long it took to get there, write that time down and use it each time you make yogurt.

After your milk has reached 180 degrees, it will need to cool. You want it to be below 110 degrees, and higher than 80 degrees. Bacteria thrives best in a warm environment, but if it's too warm, the bacteria will die. It usually takes 2.5 – 3 hours to get into this temperature range.

After the milk has cooled, you can stir in your yogurt culture. I typically use Chobani yogurt for my first batch, and then save a little bit of my yogurt batch in a small container and freeze it to use the next time I make yogurt.

After your yogurt culture is added, return the lid to your slow cooker and cover the lid with a towel or blanket (so the hole in the lid is covered; you need the liquid to stay in the pot). Cook on low overnight. Yogurt needs to culture for a minimum of 6 hours, but the longer you culture it, the thicker it will be.

After culturing overnight, you can turn off your slow cooker and place your yogurt in a container in the fridge. Yogurt is watery when it is finished; it has a lot of whey in it. If you like your yogurt to be thicker, you can drain it in some cheesecloth. I typically drain mine for 1-2 hours to have Greek Yogurt.

After it has chilled, you are ready to eat your yogurt! My favorite toppings are canned fruit and a little bit of granola.

## Lentil Tortilla Soup – 5-6 servings

Recipe by: Peas and Crayons ([peasandcrayons.com](http://peasandcrayons.com))

### Ingredients:

1 cup diced onion  
1 tsp avocado oil (or olive oil)  
1 bell pepper diced  
1 jalapeno pepper diced  
2.5 cups vegetable broth (or chicken broth if needed)  
15 oz canned tomato sauce or crushed tomatoes  
1/2 cup mild or medium salsa verde (or your favorite salsa!)  
1 TBSP tomato paste  
15 oz can black beans (drained + rinsed)  
15 oz can pinto beans (drained + rinsed)  
1 cup corn (fresh, canned, or frozen)  
3/4 cup dried red lentils  
1/2 tsp chili powder  
1/2 tsp garlic powder  
1/2 tsp cumin  
1/4 tsp cayenne pepper  
1/4-1/2 cup heavy cream\* (optional - see notes)  
salt and pepper to taste

### Instructions:

1. Chop your veggies and measure out the ingredients. This will make everything super easy to toss together!
2. Add everything **except** the heavy cream and toppings.
3. Cook on high for 4-6 hours or low for 7-8 hours, until dried lentils are cooked through and veggies are tender.
4. Swirl in the cream, add all your favorite toppings, and enjoy! You can also omit the heavy cream if you would like to do a cheaper version of this recipe.

## Classic Green Bean Casserole – 6 servings

Recipe by: Jan on Allrecipes ([www.allrecipes.com](http://www.allrecipes.com))

### Ingredients:

2 (14.5 oz) cans green beans, drained  
1 (10.75 oz) can condensed cream of mushroom soup (can do different condensed cream soup)  
1 (6 oz) can French fried onions  
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
2. Place green beans and soup in a large microwave-safe bowl. Mix well and heat in the microwave on HIGH until warm (3 to 5 minutes). Stir in 1/2 cup of cheese and heat mixture for another 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer green bean mixture to a casserole dish and sprinkle with French fried onions and remaining cheese.
3. Bake in a preheated 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) oven until the cheese melts and the onions just begin to brown (about 10 minutes).

You can also add a 12 oz can of corn (drained) to the casserole. You would combine them in with step 2.

## Lentil Bolognese – 4 servings

Recipe by: Robin at Knead to Cook ([www.kneadtocook.com](http://www.kneadtocook.com))

### Ingredients:

½ cup lentils (washed)  
1 (14 oz) can fire roasted chopped tomatoes (or RoTel)  
1 small yellow onion (diced)  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 large carrot, diced  
3 oz tomato paste  
2 cups water  
1 Tbsp Italian Seasoning  
Red pepper flakes to taste  
Salt and pepper to taste  
2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar

### Instructions:

1. Add all ingredients to your slow cooker, except the balsamic vinegar, salt, and pepper. Stir it to mix everything together.
2. Cook on high 3-4 hours or low 5-6 hours, until the lentils are tender.
3. Add the balsamic vinegar, salt, and pepper, and stir once more.
4. Serve over your favorite noodles or rice (I've put it over quinoa too and it was delicious).

## Chicken and Kielbasa – 3 servings

Recipe by: Sidetracked Sarah ([www.sidetracked sarah.com](http://www.sidetracked sarah.com))

### Ingredients:

1 lb boneless skinless chicken breasts (about 2)  
1 lb kielbasa sausage, sliced  
1 8 oz package of cream cheese  
1 cup chicken stock  
½ cup dry wine (white wine works best; can substitute cooking wine)  
1 Tbsp. + 1 tsp. minced garlic  
1 small onion, diced  
½ tsp. salt  
½ box of noodles (any kind will work, but I prefer spaghetti noodles)

### Instructions:

1. Soften cream cheese in the microwave for about 30 seconds.
2. Stir cream cheese, chicken stock, salt, garlic, mustard and wine together until well mixed.
3. Place chicken breasts & sliced kielbasa in bottom of slow cooker.
4. Place diced onions on top.
5. Pour cream cheese mixture over the top.
6. Cover & Cook on high for 4 hours or on low for 5-6 hours.
7. If the sauce gets too thick, too quickly, add more chicken broth. If it is still thin when you're ready to serve, stir in some corn starch and/or take the slow cooker lid off for the last 30 minutes.
8. When cooking time is done, cut up the chicken into bite sized pieces while it is still in the slow cooker. You can use kitchen scissors or two forks to do this.
9. Once your spaghetti noodles are cooked, stir them into the slow cooker, evenly coating the noodles with the sauce.