News Release
For Immediate Release

Slow Cooking

Do you remember when you were younger and coming home to the smell of a home-cooked meal? Was it cooked in a slower cooker? Slow cookers are a great way to prepare food and can be used throughout the year. Using a slower cooker saves on electricity and could avoid unwanted heat from the oven in the kitchen. Another advantage to using a slower cooker is that it can save time, allowing you more time to enjoy your family. Let’s look at how to properly use a slow cooker.

First, you want to make sure your cooker, utensils, and work area are cleaned and sanitized. Be sure to keep all perishable foods refrigerated until right before you need them to be placed in the cooker. If you have previously cut up foods, keep those foods stored separately in the refrigerator, as well. Keeping foods cold prior to using them assures that bacteria will not be growing on the foods, thus not having a “head start” if they are left out at room temperature.

It’s important to remember slower cookers come in a variety of sizes, so the amount of food you place in them will vary depending on the size of the cooker. Follow the manufacturer’s guidelines on the sizes and amounts of food that should be placed in your specific cooker. Keeping the lid closed at all times helps to keep the steam/moisture in and ensures the food is cooking properly.

The majority of cookers now have numerous settings. Different foods will take different amounts of time to cook. If you’re leaving for the day, it is recommended that foods be cooked on the low setting; however, if you’re at home and wish to cook it quickly, the high setting might be more appropriate for the meal you have selected. When possible, turn the cooker on high for an hour or so and then turn it down to a lower setting. If you do not have time for this step, set the cooker on low, go to work, and come home to a deliciously cooked meal! Cooking less tender or larger cuts of meats on low heat for longer periods will allow the meat to become more tender.

Should the power go out while cooking in a slow cooker, it is important to remember a few things. If you are home, immediately pull the food out and continue cooking it by another method. If you are not home and the power goes out, throw away the food, even if it looks done.

Food safety should always be a top priority in your kitchen. Remember to always cook foods to proper internal temperatures, follow good personal hygiene, and clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces.

For more information on cooking with slow cookers or food safety, contact your local county AgriLife Extension agent, [insert agent’s name here] at [insert contact information here].