

This cold snap has put us into hibernation mode and soup is on the menu!
Try some new variations and freeze some for the next cold snap. (We live in MN - it will be cold for a while yet).
On a positive note, have you noticed it is staying lighter longer at night?

Homemade Chicken Noodle Soup

Prep: 20 min.
Cook: 5-1/2 hours
Servings: 12 (3 qts.)

12 fresh baby carrots, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
4 celery ribs, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
3/4 C. finely chopped onion
1 T. minced fresh parsley
1/2 tsp. pepper
1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper
1-1/2 tsp. mustard seed
2 garlic cloves, peeled and halved
1-1/4 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breast halves
1-1/4 lbs. boneless skinless chicken thighs
4 cans (14-1/2 oz. each) chicken broth
1 pkg. (9 oz.) refrigerated linguine
Optional: Coarsely ground pepper and additional minced fresh parsley

In a 5-qt. slow cooker, combine the first 6 ingredients. Place mustard seed and garlic on a double thickness of cheesecloth; bring up corners of cloth and tie with kitchen string to form a bag. Place in slow cooker. Add chicken and broth. Cover and cook on low 5-6 hours or until meat is tender.

Discard spice bag. Remove chicken; cool slightly. Stir linguine into soup; cover and cook on high until pasta is tender, about 30 minutes longer. Cut chicken into pieces and return to soup; heat through. If desired, sprinkle with coarsely ground pepper and additional parsley.

Easy Instant Pot Beef Stew

Prep Time: 15 min.
Cook Time: 35 min.
Total Time: 1 hour 20 min.
Servings: 6

1 lb. beef stew meat, cut into 1-2 inch pieces
2 T. all-purpose flour
2 T. unsalted butter
2 C. beef broth or beef stock
5 lg. red potatoes
1 med. yellow onion, diced
1 C. carrots, chopped
2 cloves of garlic, minced
1 T. soy sauce
2 T. Worcestershire sauce
2 T. tomato paste
salt and pepper to taste

Chop vegetables into 1 - 1 1/2 inch pieces, set aside.

In a large bowl combine stew meat and flour and stir to coat.

Set Instant Pot to Sauté setting and add butter. When butter is melted and sizzling, add meat. Brown on all sides stirring only enough to prevent burning.

Pour in beef broth and scrape the bottom of the bowl to deglaze.

Add potatoes, onion, carrots, garlic, soy sauce, Worcestershire, and tomato paste. Stir until uniform.

Lock the lid of the Instant Pot and set to Stew mode for 35 minutes. Allow the pressure to release naturally after the cooking time is ended, about another 30 minutes.

Carefully move open steam valve and release the lid. Salt to taste.

Turkey Gnocchi Soup

Prep: 15 min. Cook: 25 min.
Servings: 6 (2 qts.)

1 T. butter
3 med. carrots, chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced
6 C. water
3 tsp. reduced-sodium chicken base

3/4 tsp. Italian seasoning
1 pkg. (16 oz.) potato gnocchi
2 C. cubed cooked turkey breast
1 C. frozen peas
1/2 tsp. pepper
1/2 C. shredded Parmesan cheese

In a Dutch oven, heat butter over medium heat. Add carrots; cook and stir 8-10 minutes or until crisp-tender. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer.

Stir in water, chicken base and Italian seasoning; bring to a boil. Add gnocchi. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, 3-4 minutes or until gnocchi float. Stir in turkey, peas and pepper; heat through. Top servings with cheese.

Slow-Cooker Lasagna Soup

Prep: 35 min.

Cook: 5 hours + standing

Servings: 8 (2-1/2 qts.)

1 pkg. (19-1/2 oz.) Italian turkey sausage links, casings removed
1 lg. onion, chopped
2 med. carrots, chopped
2 C. sliced fresh mushrooms
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 carton (32 oz.) reduced-sodium chicken broth
2 cans (14-1/2 oz. each) no-salt-added stewed tomatoes
2 cans (8 oz. each) no-salt-added tomato sauce
2 tsp. Italian seasoning
6 lasagna noodles, broken into 1-inch pieces
2 C. coarsely chopped fresh spinach
1 C. cubed or shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
Optional: Shredded Parmesan cheese and minced fresh basil

In a large skillet, cook sausage over medium-high heat until no longer pink, 8-10 minutes, breaking it into crumbles; drain. Transfer to a 5- or 6-qt. slow cooker.

Add onion and carrots to same skillet; cook and stir until softened, 2-4 minutes. Stir in mushrooms and garlic; cook and stir until mushrooms are softened, 2-4 minutes. Transfer to slow cooker. Stir in broth, tomatoes, tomato sauce and Italian seasoning. Cook, covered, on low 4-6 hours, until vegetables are tender.

Add noodles; cook 1 hour longer or until tender. Stir in spinach. Remove insert; let stand 10 minutes. Divide mozzarella cheese among serving bowls; ladle soup over cheese. If desired, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and basil.

Ramen Corn Chowder

Prep/Total Time: 15 min.

Servings: 4

2 C. water
1 pkg. (3 oz.) chicken ramen noodles
1 can (15-1/4 oz.) whole kernel corn, drained
1 can (14-3/4 oz.) cream-style corn
1 C. 2% milk
1 tsp. dried minced onion
1/4 tsp. curry powder
3/4 C. shredded cheddar cheese
1/3 C. cubed cooked bacon
1 T. minced fresh parsley
1 T. minced chives

In a small saucepan, bring water to a boil. Break noodles into large pieces. Add noodles and contents of seasoning packet to water. Reduce heat to medium. Cook, uncovered, for 2-3 minutes or until noodles are tender.

Stir in the corn, cream-style corn, milk, onion and curry powder; heat through. Stir in the cheese, bacon, parsley and chives until blended. If desired, top with additional bacon, chives or cheddar cheese.

Classic French Onion Soup

Prep Time: 45 min.

Total Time: 1 hr 45 min.

Servings: 8

4 T. unsalted butter
3 lb. (about 6 medium-size) onions, thinly sliced
Kosher salt

1/4 C. dry white wine
2 T. dry sherry
1 T. all-purpose flour
6 C. beef broth
4 thick slices crusty bread
1 C. Gruyère cheese, grated

Melt butter in a large Dutch oven or pot over medium heat. Add onion and season with salt. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring often at first and then only occasionally, until onions are golden brown and caramelized, 1 hour to 1 hour 15 minutes.

Add white wine and dry sherry and bring to a boil. Add flour and cook, stirring, until thickened, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in broth and let simmer 10 minutes. Season with salt.

Heat oven to broil. Place 4 broiler-safe bowls on a sheet tray and fill with soup. Top each with a slice of bread (trimming to fit, if necessary) and cheese, dividing evenly. Broil until cheese is golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Serve immediately.

Game-Stopper Chili

Prep: 25 min.

Cook: 6 hours

Servings: 12 (4 qts.)

1 can (28 oz.) diced tomatoes, undrained
1 can (15 oz.) black beans, rinsed and drained
1 can (15 oz.) kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 lb. boneless beef chuck steak, cut into 1-inch cubes
1 lb. bulk spicy pork sausage, cooked and drained
2 med. onions, chopped
1 med. sweet red pepper, chopped
1 med. green pepper, chopped
1 C. hot chunky salsa
1/3 C. medium pearl barley
2 T. chili powder
2 tsp. jarred roasted minced garlic
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. ground cumin
4 C. beef stock
2 C. shredded Mexican cheese blend
Corn chips

Place all ingredients except cheese and chips in a 6-qt. slow cooker. Cook, covered, on low 6-8 hours or until beef is tender. Stir in cheese until melted. Serve with chips.

Pull-Apart Cheese Bread

Servings: 6 to 8

1 round loaf artisan bread (16- to 20-oz. loaf)
1-1/2 to 2 C. (6 to 8 oz.) shredded cheese, like Monterey Jack, mozzarella, provolone, cheddar, or a mix
Optional mix-ins: cooked bacon or sausage, minced chives or sliced green onions, red pepper flakes, chili powder
1/4 C. unsalted butter

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Slice the bread horizontally and vertically into 1-inch cubes. Do not slice all the way through the loaf — leave bottom of the loaf intact with the bread pieces still attached.

Combine the cheese with any mix-ins: Toss the cheese and mix-ins together in a small bowl. This helps make sure the ingredients are evenly distributed when you stuff the bread.

Gently stuff the cheese into the bread between the slices. Stuff between the vertical slices first, then go back and fill in the spaces between the horizontal cuts — it's a bit easier this way! It also helps to have a helper who can hold the slices apart while you stuff.

Transfer the stuffed loaf to a sheet of foil. Melt the butter in the microwave, then pour evenly over the loaf.

Wrap the loaf tightly in foil.

Bake the loaf for 20 minutes. Uncover the top and bake for another 10 minutes, until the cheese is totally melted and the top of the loaf is crispy.

Serve the loaf while still hot from the oven.

Note: The bread can be stuffed a few hours ahead of when you plan to serve. It will be fine on the counter for an hour, or you can refrigerate it (wrapped in foil) for a few hours. Wait to pour the butter over the top until just before you put it in the oven.

Quote of the Week:

“What a wonderful thought it is that some of the best days of our lives haven't even happened yet.”

