



CLIPPINGS a weekly column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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For Immediate Release

Cooking with ISU Extension and Outreach

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The weather is cooling off and thoughts are turning to heartier foods than the usual summer fare. The slow cooker is an easy and economical option for those meals.

Tips for the slow cooker:

- Cut up vegetables and meat the night before. Store them in the refrigerator overnight in storage containers or bags. Transfer to the slow cooker the next morning for quick assembly.
- Fill the slow cooker at least half full and no more than two thirds full for proper cooking.
- Don't peek! Each time you lift the lid of the slow cooker to 'check,' you prolong the cooking time.
- Hard vegetables such as carrots can be cut into smaller pieces to be sure they will adequately cook. Soft vegetables such as zucchini or mushrooms can be added the last hour of cooking.

Keep food safety in mind when using the slow cooker:

- Foods cooked in the slow cooker need to reach appropriate internal temperatures and be held at 140°F or above.
- Completely thaw frozen ingredients before putting them in the slow cooker. Frozen foods, especially frozen meat, can delay cooking time and reduce cooking temperatures. This can cause food to be at harmful temperatures for a longer period of time.
- Ensure thorough cooking of meat by cutting it into chunks or smaller pieces.
- Refrigerate leftovers in shallow containers to ensure they cool quickly. It is not recommended to put the hot liner from the slow cooker containing hot food, in the refrigerator. This practice could delay cooling and warm up the entire refrigerator, thereby giving harmful bacteria the opportunity to grow and make food unsafe.

To learn more about healthy shopping and cooking, including more about using the slow cooker, register for an upcoming *Healthy and Homemade* series offered by ISU Extension and Outreach. The *Healthy and Homemade* series focuses on practical aspects of planning for healthy eating, cooking, shopping and saving time and money.

Healthy and Homemade will be hosted...

- In Sioux City: Sept. 19, 26 and Oct. 3 from 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Visit www.extension.iastate.edu/woodbury for more details or register online at <http://bit.ly/hh13954>.
- In Orange City: Oct. 15, 22 and 29 from 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Visit www.extension.iastate.edu/sioux or call 712-737-4230 for more information and/or to register.
- In Sibley: Nov. 7, 14 and 21 from 6:00-7:30 p.m.
Visit www.extension.iastate.edu/osceola or register online at <http://bit.ly/hh13952>.

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