



Woof! An Old Dog Scores a New Trick

I GET IT. I REALLY DO. You get up early, and maybe you work out. Then you climb into your car or run for the train and go to work. Again, you work. Out. Probably the last thing on your mind is getting into the kitchen to prepare a meal after a day at work.

I stopped at one of the large supermarkets last week in the early evening. It was a market that had multiple stations of different food items. Every seat was filled at the various stations. For the most part, each patron was eating solo while looking at a screen, either phone or pad. Everyone was plugged in.

The salad bar was busy. Lots of people filling plastic containers with arguably fresh vegetables and lettuce. The turn-over is high. The produce

doesn't just sit around. I imagine the salad will make its way to a counter where it will be consumed quickly by someone who just wants to eat something tasty, but wants to get home.

So, I get it. You work hard. You want to eat well, but not spend your entire night making dinner. I've been mulling this over. In winter, especially, it's nice to come home to a comforting meal. Get out of those restrictive clothes, throw on some sweats, get some music playing, and sit down to something really delicious...ready and waiting for you.

There's a machine that accomplishes this feat. A slow cooker. My machine and I weren't friends. On the two previous occasions I used it, my beans were hard as pebbles and the pork, that was supposed to be "meltingly" tender was stringy and

dry. Something was obviously wrong. Of course, I blamed the machine. Certainly not *moi*.

But this cooker was my key to food, fast...not fast food. Once again, I took it out and set it on the counter top. We looked at each other. I circled it like a prize fighter sizing up his opponent, jabbing and feinting, daring it to beat me. This time I was ready; I watched YouTube. The couple on the screen made some beautiful dishes. They smiled and talked to each other. It was revelatory.

I contemplated all the things I could make. My friend's daughter, who gave me this seemingly wondrous gift, told me she made a cheesecake in hers. OK. Maybe later. Right now, I wanted something with some warmth, from temperature, as well as spice. It had to have protein, and some



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vegetables, because the whole idea was to sit down to a complete meal, not start to make one. The smiling couple made a pork roast. They made brisket. Both looked delicious but required some side dishes. Then they showed chili. Aha! It was served in a bowl. There's something about dinner in a bowl that's so comforting. Ramen. Beef Stew. Pasta. All good.

I gathered my ingredients and loaded my slow cooker. The recipe said to throw everything in together. Nothing hard about that. I turned the machine to high and left the house. I had a lot of appointments that day and wouldn't be home for several hours. Supposedly I'd have hot chili (an oxymoron, for sure) waiting for me. Remembering my last two trials with this cooker, I picked up a pizza. Just in case.

It was dark when I got home. It was cold and I was hungry. I was thinking about how long it would take to preheat the oven and cook the pizza, but huzzah! The most amazing aroma wafted toward me from the kitchen. My chili, redolent with cumin, coriander, and garlic was calling out to me. Sit. Stay. And I did as I was told. 🐕

Slow Cooker Chicken Chili

INGREDIENTS

- 6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts and/or thighs
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 1 jalapeno, seeded and chopped
- 1 can green chiles, chopped
- 1 ½ teaspoons fine sea salt
- 1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes or to taste
- 2 1/3 cups dried beans (black or Great Northern or a combination) soaked overnight in water and drained
- 5 1/3 cups water or a combination of water and chicken broth



To serve: wedges of lime, sour cream, chopped onion, corn chips

INSTRUCTIONS

Place all ingredients into the slow cooker. Stir to combine. Turn the slow cooker to HIGH. Get ready for something delicious in 5 hours.



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teaches the fine art of cooking.*

*For more information,
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PHOTO: GIRMANTAS URBONAS