

Pressure cookers ease meal-making

AP — During the hectic work week, preparing dinner for your family can turn into a race against the clock. That's why people are rediscovering an old time-saving friend — the pressure cooker.

Pressure cookers are making a comeback because they cook certain foods, such as pot roasts and poultry, as much as three times faster than conventional cooking, with tender, juicy results. So next time you're caught in a kitchen time crunch, remember the pressure cooker.

Inside a pressure cooker, the atmosphere surrounding the food gets much hotter than in other cooking methods. As the cooker traps steam from boiling liquids, the pressure builds up. The mounting pressure produces a much higher cooking temperature than is normally possible, so the food cooks quickly and evenly.

Before using your pressure cooker, be sure to read the instruction manual that came with it. Your cooker should have a safety lock to protect you. The lock prevents the cooker from being opened until pressure is safely reduced.

ONCE YOU are familiar with the way your cooker operates, you'll be able to use it for many foods. To convert recipes, use the following guidelines and be prepared to experiment.

• Before every use, check the gasket and gasket, and make sure the vent pipe is clear.

• Choose foods that cook well in moist heat, such as stews, pot roasts,

poultry and some vegetables.

• To determine the cooking time, start by decreasing the conventional cooking time by two-thirds, to one-third of the original cooking time. You can always add more time if the food isn't done.

• To generate steam, your pressure cooker needs to contain some liquid. You can reduce the amount of liquid from your original recipe because it won't evaporate as much, but be sure to have the minimum amount your instruction manual suggests.

• Never fill the cooker more than two-thirds full, to allow room for steam buildup.

• At the end of the cooking time, either remove the cooker from the heat to let pressure drop slowly or hold it under cold running water to reduce pressure quickly. Turn to your instruction booklet or recipe to see which method you should use.

• To avoid steam burns, lift the lid away from you when remove it.

YOU WILL find 4- to 9-quart cookers that cost anywhere from \$75 to more than \$200. Aluminum cookers are usually the least expensive.

Pressure cookers with copper in the bottom (to aid even heating) tend to be more expensive. You also will find some cookers have a non-removable pressure regulator built into the lid. Others have the traditional removable rocking pressure regulator. All new models should have the safety lock feature.

Berry fools for April Fool's Day

See related story: 1B.

BERRY FOOL

12 ounces fresh or frozen raspberries, blackberries or strawberries
 3-4 tablespoons confectioner's sugar
 4 tablespoons Chambord or Framboise raspberry brandy
 1 cup heavy cream
 1 1/2 tablespoons confectioner's sugar
 8 amaretto cookies, crushed
 4-6 teaspoons dry sherry

Garnish:
 1 pt. fresh berries
 1/2 cup heavy cream
 1/2 tablespoon confectioners sugar

Puree fruit in blender or food processor. Force puree through wire mesh strainer to remove seeds. Sweeten puree with 3-4 tablespoons' confectioners sugar. Stir in fruit brandy or liqueur. Refrigerate.

Whisk together 1 cup heavy cream and 1 1/2 tablespoons confectioner's by hand or in a mixer until almost

stiff. Refrigerate. Mix together crushed amaretto cookies and sherry in a small bowl. Divide cookie mixture equally and spoon into serving dishes or glasses. Set aside. Using a rubber spatula, fold whipped cream into fruit puree. Carefully spoon berry puree-cream into each glass. Top with 1/4 to 1/2 cup fresh berries. Refrigerate 1 hour. At serving time decorate each serving with a few dollops of sweetened whipped cream. Makes 3 individual 1 cup servings or 6 individual 1/2 cup servings.

SQUIRE'S COFFEE-RASPBERRY TRIFLE

English Coffee Custard:
 1 tablespoons hot coffee or hot water
 1 tablespoon instant coffee granules
 2 cups light cream
 1/2 cup sugar
 5 egg yolks
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 1/2 cup heavy cream, whipped soft peak.

Combine hot coffee and instant

coffee granules and set aside. In a medium saucepan, heat cream until it just comes to a boil. Remove from heat. In a medium mixing bowl, beat together yolks and sugar using a whisk or mixer until lightly colored. Very slowly add 1/2 of the hot cream to the yolk mixture stirring constantly. Return mixture to saucepan. Continue to stir mixture over medium heat with a wooden spoon until mixture reaches 145 degrees on a candy thermometer and mixture thickens to coat a spoon. Remove from heat and continue to stir to cool. Strain into a medium bowl and stir in coffee and vanilla. When custard is lukewarm, refrigerate 2 hours. Fold in whipped cream and refrigerate again.

Trifle:
 2 1/2 by 1/2 inch layer spongecake
 8 tablespoons chambord — black raspberry liqueur
 1/2 cup raspberry, tayberry or black current jam, heated
 1 pint fresh raspberries

1/2 cup heavy cream, chilled
 2 tablespoons confectioner's sugar

Garnish:
 1/2 pint fresh raspberries
 1/2 cup toasted sliced almonds

To assemble the trifle:

Cover the top of each layer of spongecake with liqueur. Spoon or brush each top with melted jam. Set first layer into a glass or white ceramic trifle or soufflé dish. Cover cake with 1/2 cup of coffee custard. Add a layer of fresh raspberries, then top with remaining cake layer. Repeat with custard and raspberries. Refrigerate at least 2 hours or overnight. At serving time, whip heavy cream and confectioners sugar until it forms soft peaks. If you wish to pipe cream with a pastry bag, cream should be whipped until almost stiff and then refrigerated after decorating. Decorate top with remaining 1/2 pint raspberries and toasted almonds.

Savor flavor of homegrown herbs

See Larry James' Taste Buds Column: 1B.

HERBED CHICKEN

8 boneless chicken breasts
 1 cup seasoned flour (below)
 1/2 cup milk
 4 tablespoons olive oil

Flip chicken breasts in milk. Roll in seasoned flour mixture. Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium-high

heat. Sauté chicken on both sides until golden brown and until juices run clear when pierced with a fork. Enjoy!

SEASONED FLOUR

1 cup flour
 1/2 teaspoon ground fresh pepper
 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme or 1 teaspoon fresh
 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary or 1 teaspoon fresh
 1/2 teaspoon paprika
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

Combine all ingredients and mix well.

HERBED BROILED SHRIMPS

1 tablespoon ground pepper
 1/2 cup olive oil
 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
 2 tablespoons chopped basil
 2 tablespoons chopped oregano
 4 cloves garlic, minced
 1 1/2 teaspoons salt

2 tablespoons lemon juice
 1 pound medium shrimp

Combine the first 8 ingredients and pour over shrimps. Marinate in refrigerator overnight for best flavor. Skewer shrimps or place on a broiler and broil about 5 inches from heat until shrimp are no longer opaque. Flip, brush with marinade and continue cooking 'til shrimps are cooked throughout.

Cabbage dip: It's a party treat

AP — Transform a medium-sized head of cabbage into an edible bowl for dip at your next party, with help from your microwave oven.

Take the showy presentation a step further by lining a basket with cabbage leaves and setting the cabbage bowl and vegetable dippers inside.

CABBAGE MUSTARD DIP

1/2 cup dairy sour cream
 1/2 cup plain yogurt
 1/2 cup Dijon-style mustard
 2 tablespoons cornstarch
 1/2 cup chicken broth
 One 2-ounce jar sliced pimento, drained
 1 medium head green or red cabbage (about 1 1/2 pounds)
 Red or green cabbage leaves (optional)
 Assorted fresh vegetables for dipping

In a small, microwave-safe bowl combine sour cream, yogurt, Dijon-style mustard and cornstarch. Stir in the chicken broth. Cook, uncovered, on 100 percent power (high) for 4 to 6 minutes (low-wattage ovens, 6 to 8 minutes), or until thickened and bubbly, stirring after every minute. Stir in the pimento. Cover and set aside.

Rinse cabbage thoroughly. Slice off about one-fourth of the cabbage from the top end, opposite the core end of the cabbage. Cut out the center of the cabbage, leaving about 1/2 inch of cabbage on the sides and 1 inch on the bottom. (Save the cabbage that has been removed to use in coleslaw.)

Place the hollowed cabbage head on a microwave-safe pie plate. Cover loosely with plastic wrap. Turn back one corner of the plastic wrap to vent. Cook on high for 5 to 8 minutes (low-wattage ovens, 8 to 10 minutes) or until barely tender.

To serve, carefully transfer cabbage to a basket lined with cabbage leaves. Spoon in about half of the warm mustard dip. Cover any remaining sauce; let stand at room temperature up to 1 hour. Serve sauce with assorted fresh vegetables for dipping. Refill cabbage with remaining dip as necessary. To reheat dip, cook on high for 1 to 2 minutes or until hot, stirring once. Makes about 1 1/2 cup dip.

Nutrition information per tablespoon: 13 cal., 1 g fat (89 percent calories from fat), 1 mg chol., 0 g pro., 1 g carb., 93 mg sodium.

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