



300 Low-Carb Slow Cooker Recipes

Healthy Dinners That Are Ready When You Are!

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FAIR WINDS
PRESS
BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS



For my sister Kim,
who works way too hard,
and loves her slow cooker.

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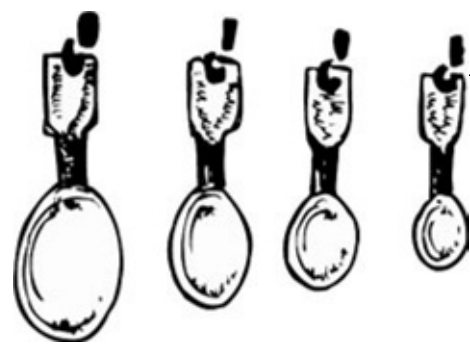
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Introduction

My Journey to Slow Cooker Master

I have a confession: When my editor, Holly, suggested I write a low-carb slow cooker book, I balked. Oh, I knew it would be popular—many readers had written me asking for a slow cooker book. I just wasn't thrilled at the idea of a couple of months of slow cooked dinners. I'd made some slow cooked meals that were pretty good, but overall, it seemed to me that most slow cooked food was not brilliant. Too many dishes seemed to be waterlogged, mushy, and insipid. Furthermore, so many slow cooker recipes seemed to rely on high-carb canned cream soups—indeed, many slow cooker books seemed to think that “put food in pot, dump in condensed cream of mushroom soup, and cook on low until you come home from work” was a recipe—but not in my book, figuratively or literally!

So I resisted for quite a while, but those e-mails saying, “Please, please, write us a slow cooker book!” were piling up in my inbox. I needed to write a slow cooker book! But it was clear I had to get better at slow cooking.

Well, my mom is a retired librarian, and I learned years ago that if you want to learn something, you need to look it up. So I went to Amazon.com and read reviews of slow cooker books to determine which were drawing raves. I then read the books that got the best reviews, gleaning what I could from them of the tricks of making slow cooker food as appealing as possible, both in taste and texture. Not surprisingly, my slow cooker performance took a remarkable upturn!

I also got an idea of what slow cookers do well. Obviously, they're not for anything that you want to come out crispy and brown, but if what you need is slow, moist cooking, a slow cooker will do it better than any other appliance. Preparing soups and stews and braising are obvious slow cooker strengths, but I also learned that a slow cooker is terrific for cooking anything that needs to be baked in a water bath (sometimes called a bain-marie)—custards, in particular. I was thrilled to discover that my slow cooker did the best job ever of roasting nuts and seeds, and it's perfect for hot beverages for parties and hors d'oeuvres that would otherwise need a chafing dish.

I was very surprised to learn that cooking fish in my slow cooker worked well. You can't leave it for hours and hours because fish overcooks easily. But just an hour or so of the gentle heat of the slow cooker leaves fish tender, moist, and succulent. Do try it when you have an hour to get dinner on the table, even if you mostly use your slow cooker to cook supper while you're out of the house for hours.

I also had a few spectacular failures. (Don't even ask about the brussels sprouts!) But overall, I was pleased to discover that with a few simple considerations in mind, slow cookers can turn out truly wonderful food.

About Slow Cookers

By the time I finished this project, I owned three slow cookers. All of them are Rival Crock-Pots, the original slow cooker. (Crock-Pot is a brand name. All Crock-Pots are slow cookers, but not all slow

cookers are Crock-Pots.) The Crock-Pot, as the original, is pretty much the gold standard of slow cookers. The heat comes from all around the crockery insert, rather than only coming from the bottom. If you have one of the slow cookers that has the heating element only on the bottom, you'll have to experiment a bit with these recipes to see if the times are correct.

The "low" setting on a Rival Crock-Pot is around 200°F (93°C) (just above, actually, because things will boil eventually at this setting, and the boiling point is 212°F [100°C]), and the "high" setting is around 300°F (150°C). If you have another brand of slow cooker that lets you set specific temperatures, keep this in mind. If you have another brand of slow cooker and you're not sure what temperature the settings will give (look in the booklet that came with it for this information), you can fill the slow cooker with water, heat it for 2 hours on low, and test the water's temperature with a kitchen thermometer, but this is a lot of trouble. I'd probably just use the low and high settings and keep mental notes on how meals turn out.

A good thing about the original Crock-Pot is that the crockery insert lifts out of the base. This allows it to be refrigerated, microwaved (if your microwave is big enough), and—most important—put in the dishwasher. *Do not* put your slow cooker in the dishwasher if the crockery cannot be separated from the heating element! Nothing electric should ever be submerged in water.

My slow cookers range in size. The smallest holds 2 1/2 quarts (2.4 liters), the middle-sized holds 3 quarts (2.8 liters), while the big one holds 5 1/2 quarts (5 liters). The 5 1/2-quart can easily hold enough food for 8 people. It's the obvious choice if you have a big family or like to cook enough to have leftovers for future meals. The 3-quart is the most common size. If you have a family of 4, it should be about right. If you have this size, figure you'll need to halve recipes that make 6 to 8 servings. The 2 1/2-quart is great for making dips, hot hors d'oeuvres, and hot beverages, but it is a bit small for family cooking.

Another consideration: My 5 1/2-quart Crock-Pot will fit a 6-cup (1.4 L) casserole dish, 8-inch (20 cm) springform pan, and a standard Bundt pan opening up many new cooking options. If you have a smaller unit and want to make custards, cheesecakes, and other dishes that call for inserting a dish or pan, you'll have to find dishes that will fit. It's easier with a bigger slow cooker.

Keep in mind that slow cookers come in round or oval shapes. You'll want a round slow cooker, instead of an oval, so you can insert a round glass casserole or a springform. Sadly, a big, round slow cooker takes the most storage space. I know of no good way around this.

Some Things I've Learned about Slow Cooking

- Browning meat or poultry before putting it in the slow cooker upgrades vast hordes of recipes. Yes, it takes time and dirties up a skillet. But the flavor and texture that browning bring are worth it, worth it, worth it. Often I'll have you sauté your vegetables, too.
- It's important to keep liquids to the minimum that will make the recipe work, especially in recipes that have a lot of vegetables. All of the liquid that cooks out of the food while slow cooking will accumulate in the pot because no evaporation occurs. It's easy to end up with very watery food. This rule does not apply to soups, of course.
- Because of this accumulation of liquid, it's a good idea to use concentrated flavors. In particular, you'll find that in many of these recipes I use both broth and bouillon concentrate to make what amounts to a broth that is double-strength or more.
- Sometimes it's a good idea to transfer the liquid from the slow cooker to a saucepan and boil it hard till it's reduced by half. Half the volume means double the flavor.
- It's generally best to use lean cuts of meat, and you'll see I've often used skinless poultry, too. The

is because fat that becomes crackling and succulent in the oven makes slow cooker food unbearably greasy. This makes slow cooking a great way to cook some of the leaner and tougher cuts of meat that you might not want to roast. It also makes slow cooking a good cooking method for those of you who are watching calories as well as carbs. It can even save you money—often tough and bon cuts of meat are cheap.

- For some strange reason, vegetables cook more slowly in a slow cooker than meat does. If you put vegetables on top of the meat in your slow cooker, you may find that they're still crunchy when the rest of the dinner is done. Put the ingredients in the pot in the order given in the recipes in this book.
- For this reason, too, it's best to cut vegetables into fairly small pieces. You'll find I've told you what size to cut things, for the most part. If the recipe says 1/2-inch (13 mm) cubes, and you cut your turnips in 1 1/2-inch (3.8 cm) cubes, you're going to have underdone turnips.
- It's never a bad idea to spray your slow cooker with nonstick cooking spray before putting the food in it. I don't always do this, though I've specified it where it seems a particularly good idea. But I can't think of a situation in which it would hurt.

Things That Other Slow Cooker Books Seem to Think Are Terribly Important, But Don't Seem Like a Big Deal to Me

- Several books wanted me to use only whole spices, such as whole peppercorns or coarse-cracked pepper, whole cloves, whole leaf herbs, etc., etc. I used what I had on hand. I got tasty food.
- A few books felt that you shouldn't season your slow cooker food until the end of cooking time. I do often suggest that you add salt and pepper to taste at the end of the cooking time, but other than that, our seasonings go into the pot with the food. I've never had a problem with this.
- Some books were emphatic about the size of the slow cooker. This matters some; you can't put 4 quarts (3.8 L) of soup in a 3-quart (2.8 L) slow cooker, and if you're only making a small batch of dip, you probably shouldn't use a 5 1/2-quart (5 L) pot. But some cookbooks predicted dire results if I didn't fill my slow cooker at least halfway. I often filled my big slow cooker less than halfway. I got tasty food.

About Timing

The biggest reason for the popularity of slow cookers is what I call "time-shifting"—the fact that they allow you to cook dinner at some time other than right before you eat it, so you can eat soon after you get home from work. Because of this, many slow cooker books tell you to cook most of their recipes for 8 hours or more. They figure you'll be away that long.

Unfortunately, I find that many dishes get unbearably mushy and overdone if they cook that long. I've tried to give the cooking times that I feel give the best results, which may not be the time that fits with your workday. These can generally be extended by an hour without a problem, but extending them by 2, 3, or more hours may well give you a very different result than I got.

A better idea is to do all your prep work the night before—cooking dinner after dinner, as it were. Then lift the filled crockery insert out of the base and stash it in the fridge overnight. The next morning, pull it out of the fridge, put it in the base, and turn it on, just before you leave the house. Starting with chilled food will add 1 to 2 hours to your cooking time. If you do this, don't heat up the base before putting the chilled crockery insert in! You may well crack the crockery.

If you need to extend your time even further, consider getting a timer. You should be fine letting your food wait 2 hours before the timer turns on the slow cooker—3 if the food is straight out of the fridge when the crockery goes in the base. It's a better idea to delay the starting time than to turn the pot off early because retained heat will cause the food to continue cooking even after the pot is turned off. Ask the nice people at your local hardware store about a timer you can plug things into. If you're just now acquiring your slow cooker, there are units available with time-delayed starters built in.

On the other hand, if you want to speed up a slow cooker recipe, you can do so by getting the contents warm before putting the crockery insert in the base. The crocks for two of my three slow cookers fit in my microwave. I have, on occasion, microwaved the full crock on medium heat until it was warm through before putting the crock in the base to continue cooking. This cuts a good hour off the cooking time.

You can, of course, also use the high setting when the low setting is specified. This will cut the cooking time roughly in half. However, I find that for most recipes low yields better results. If you have the time to use it when it's recommended, I suggest you do so.

If you're going to be around for a while and leave the house later, you could cook on high for an hour or so and then switch to low when you leave. Figure, again, that each hour on high is worth 2 hours on low.

The size of your slow cooker relative to your recipe will somewhat affect the cooking time. If you have a 5 1/2-quart (5 L) slow cooker and the food only fills it 1/4 full, you can likely subtract 1 hour from the cooking time. Conversely, if the food fills your slow cooker to within an inch of the rim, you can add an hour.



Ingredients Common and Not-So-Common Ingredients

Here are a few ingredients I thought needed a little explanation:

- **Beer**—One or two recipes in this book call for beer. The lowest carbohydrate beer on the market is Michelob Ultra, but I don't much like it. Still, it should be okay for cooking. Miller Lite and Milwaukee's Best Light are better, and they have only about 0.5 grams more carb per can.
- **Black soybeans**—Most beans and other legumes are too high in carbohydrates for many low-carb dieters, but there is one exception. Black soybeans have a very low usable carb count, about 1 gram per serving, because most of the carbs in them are fiber. Several recipes in this book call for Eden brand canned black soybeans. Many health food stores carry these. If yours doesn't, I'll bet they could special order them for you. Health food stores tend to be wonderful about special orders.

I wouldn't recommend eating soybean recipes several times a week. I know that soy has a reputation for being the Wonder Health Food of All Existence, but there are reasons to be cautious. For decades now, soy has been known to be hard on the thyroid, and if you're trying to lose weight and improve your health, a slow thyroid is the last thing you need. More alarmingly, a study done in Hawaii in 2000 showed a correlation between the amount of tofu subjects ate in middle age and their rate and severity of cognitive problems in old age. Because scientists suspect the problem lies with the soy estrogens that have been so highly touted, any unfermented soy product, including canned soybeans, is suspect.

This doesn't mean we should completely shun soybeans and soy products, but we need to approach them with caution and eat them in moderation. Because many low-carb specialty products are soy-heavy, you'll want to pay attention there, too. Personally, I try to keep my soy consumption to 1 serving a week or less.

- **Blackstrap molasses**—What the heck is molasses doing in a low-carb cookbook?! It's practically all carbohydrate, after all. Well, yes, but I've found that combining Splenda with a very small amount of molasses gives a good, brown-sugar flavor to all sorts of recipes. Always use the darkest molasses you can find. The darker it is, the stronger the flavor, and the lower the carb count. That's why I specify blackstrap, the darkest, strongest molasses there is. It's nice to know that blackstrap is also where all the minerals they take out of sugar end up. It may be high-carb, but at least it's not a nutritional wasteland. Still, I use only small amounts.

Most health food stores carry blackstrap molasses, but if you can't get it, buy the darkest molasses you can find. Most grocery store brands come in both light and dark varieties.

Why not use some of the artificial brown-sugar flavored sweeteners out there? Because I've tried them, and I haven't tasted one I would be willing to buy again. Caution: Splenda brown sugar

blend contains sugar.

- **Broths**—Canned or boxed chicken broth and beef broth are very handy items to keep around and certainly quicker than making your own. However, the quality of most of the canned broth you'll find at your local grocery store is appallingly bad. The chicken broth has all sorts of chemicals in and often sugar as well. The beef broth is worse. It frequently has no beef in it whatsoever. I refuse to use these products, and you should, too.

However, there are a few canned or boxed broths on the market worth buying. Many grocery stores now carry a brand called Kitchen Basics, which contains no chemicals at all. It is packaged in quart-size boxes, much like soy milk. Kitchen Basics comes in both chicken and beef. Health food stores also have good quality canned and boxed broths. Both Shelton and Health Valley brands are widely distributed in the United States.

Decent packaged broth will cost you a little more than the stuff that is made of salt and chemicals but not a whole lot more. If you watch for sales, you can often get it as cheaply as the bad stuff, so stock up. When my health food store runs a sale on good broth for 89 cents a can, I buy piles of it!

One last note: You will also find canned vegetable broth, particularly at health food stores. This is tasty, but because it runs much higher in carbohydrates than chicken and beef broths, I'd avoid it.

- **Bouillon or broth concentrates**—Bouillon or broth concentrate comes in cubes, crystals, liquids, and pastes. It is generally full of salt and chemicals and doesn't taste notably like the animal it supposedly came from. It definitely does *not* make a suitable substitute for good quality broth if you're making a pot of soup. However, these products can be useful for adding a little kick of flavor here and there—more as seasonings than as soups. For this use, I keep them on hand. I now use a paste bouillon concentrate product called Better Than Bouillon that comes in both chicken and beef flavors. I find it preferable to the granules or cubes.
- **Carb Countdown**—When I wrote the original edition of this book, the Atkins Boom of 2003 was still going strong, and grocery stores were carrying a lot of low-carb specialty products, some dubious, other quite useful. Carb Countdown, a carbohydrate-reduced milk put out by Hood Dairy was one that I found very useful, and accordingly I used it in several recipes.

Things have changed. Hood still makes the product, though they long since renamed it Calorie Countdown. However, far fewer stores are carrying it than were when the original edition came out. If you can find Calorie Countdown near you, great! If not, here are some possible substitutions, and their carb counts:

LC-Milk: As I write this, a company called LC Foods has just introduced a powdered low-carb milk product called LC-Milk. Because it's powdered, it is easy to ship and easy to store. You simply combine the powder with water and heavy cream, and chill, though I'm thinking for a slow cooker recipe the chilling part would be unnecessary. Sufficient powder to make 1 cup (235 ml) of milk, or 10 teaspoons, has 1 gram of carb, with 1 gram of fiber, for 0 grams usable carb. The cream adds 1 gram of carb. The two combined have 192 calories per cup. The mix has no lactose, though there would be a little in the cream. LC-Milk is available from www.holdthecarbs.com, and may well be carried by low-carb online retailers by the time this sees print.

Half-and-half: 10 grams of carbohydrate per cup. Of the substitutes available at your grocery store, this will likely give a result most similar to the original recipe. (For international readers: Half-and-half is a mixture of half milk, half heavy cream.) Adds 187 calories over the Carb Countdown.

Heavy cream: 7 grams carbohydrate per cup. Obviously, this will give a richer result. Adds 684

calories. On the other hand, I've long since started trying to get 75 percent of my calories from fat and I consider butterfat to be a healthful food. Your call.

Heavy cream and water, in equal parts: This works well in many recipes, and of course it gives a lighter result than pure cream. Simple third-grade arithmetic tells me you'll get 3.5 grams of carbohydrate, and an extra 342 calories per cup.

Almond milk: I've been playing around with almond milk recently, and I like it. It's now widely available in big grocery stores; look for it near the soy milk. (I would *not* use soy milk. I try to minimize my soy consumption. I'm unconvinced the stuff is safe.) Keep in mind that almond milk comes in sweetened and unsweetened varieties; obviously you want the unsweetened kind. The brand I've been getting has just 1 gram of carbohydrate per cup, with 1 gram of fiber, for 0 grams usable carb, so this would be your lowest carb option. It's also far and away the lowest calorie choice, at just 35 calories per cup. It will, however, have a somewhat different flavor than dairy—mild and pleasant, but different. This is also a lactose-free choice.

Milk: You know—just milk. It's 12 grams of carb per cup, so it's the highest carb choice, but in a recipe that makes, say, 5 or 6 servings, that's not disastrous. I'd recommend whole milk. Butterfat is nutritious, and it certainly tastes better than the low-fat stuff. It's an extra 22 calories per cup.

Final note: I've heard from some readers that their grocery stores dropped Carb Countdown, but started re-stocking Calorie Countdown due to customer requests. So, it doesn't hurt to ask.

- **Cauliflower**—You'll notice a certain reliance on cauliflower in this book, both in the form of “Fauxtatoes” (see recipe [page 343](#)) and in the form of Cauli-Rice (see recipe [page 343](#)). This is because many slow cooker recipes make wonderful gravy, and it's a shame not to have a side dish to help you eat it. (Indeed, traditional slow cooker recipes show a similar dependence on potatoes, rice, and noodles.)

You can skip the cauliflower if you like. Or you can substitute tofu shirataki noodles.

By the way: If cauliflower (or another suggested garnish or side dish) isn't mentioned in the ingredient list, it's merely suggested and it's not included in the nutritional analysis for the dish. If it is in the ingredient list, it has been included in the analysis.

- **Chili garlic paste**—This is a traditional Asian ingredient, consisting mostly, as the name strongly implies, of hot chiles and garlic. If, like me, you're a chile-head, you'll find endless ways to use the stuff once you have it on hand. Chili garlic paste comes in jars, and it keeps for months in the refrigerator. It is worth seeking out at Asian markets or in the international foods aisle of big grocery stores.
- **Chipotle peppers canned in adobo sauce**—Chipotle peppers are smoked jalapeños. They're very different from regular jalapeños, and they're quite delicious. Look for them, canned in adobo sauce, in the Mexican foods section of big grocery stores. Because you're unlikely to use the whole can at once, you'll be happy to know that you can store your chipotles in the freezer, where they'll keep for months. I just float my can in a bowl of hot tap water for 5 minutes till it's thawed enough to peel off one or two peppers and then put it right back in the freezer.
- **Erythritol**—This is one of the polyol or sugar alcohol sweeteners, and the one I use most often. Unlike maltitol, which is widely used in commercial sugar-free sweets, erythritol has very little gastrointestinal effect. It also has the lowest absorption profile of all the sugar alcohols, so it has virtually no usable carbohydrate, while I generally count half a gram for maltitol. My local health food stores all carry erythritol, but again, you can buy it through [CarbSmart.com](#) or [Amazon.com](#) if you can't find it locally.

You can substitute xylitol, another polyol rapidly growing in popularity. Be aware, however, that it is profoundly toxic to dogs, so don't let your pooch sneak a bite.

- **Fish sauce or nuoc mam or nam pla**—This is a salty, fermented seasoning widely used in Southeast Asian cooking, available in Asian grocery stores and in the Asian food sections of big grocery stores. Grab it when you find it; it keeps nicely without refrigeration. Fish sauce is used in a few (really great) recipes in this book, and it adds an authentic flavor. In a pinch, you can substitute soy sauce, although you'll lose some of the Southeast Asian accent.
- **Garlic**—I use only fresh garlic, except for occasional recipes for sprinkle-on seasoning blends. Nothing tastes like the real thing. To my taste buds, even the jarred, chopped garlic in oil doesn't taste like fresh garlic. We won't even *talk* about garlic powder. You may use jarred garlic if you like—half a teaspoon should equal about 1 clove of fresh garlic. If you choose to use powdered garlic, well, I can't stop you, but I'm afraid I can't promise the recipes will taste the same either. One quarter teaspoon of garlic powder is the rough equivalent of 1 clove of fresh garlic.
- **Ginger root**—Many recipes in this book call for fresh ginger, sometimes called ginger root. Dried powdered ginger is *not* a substitute. Fortunately, fresh ginger freezes beautifully. Drop the whole ginger root (called a hand of ginger) into a resealable plastic freezer bag and toss it in the freezer. When time comes to use it, pull it out, peel enough of the end for your immediate purposes, and grate it. Ginger grates just fine while still frozen. Throw the remaining root back in the bag and toss it back in the freezer.

Ground fresh ginger root in oil is available in jars at some very comprehensive grocery stores. I buy this when I can find it without added sugar, but otherwise, I grate my own.

- **Granular Sucralose**—Since *15 Minute Low-Carb Recipes* was first published, sucralose, best known by the trade name Splenda, has gone off-patent. There are now dozens of knock-offs and store brands, and there's no reason not to use them instead of the name brand. Do look for one that measures cup-for-cup like sugar. Be wary of brown sugar blends and other sucralose blends; these have sugar in them. And remember that because of the maltodextrin used to bulk it, granular sucralose has about 24 grams of carbohydrate per cup—the *0 carb* figure is an artifact of the teeny serving size listed on the label.
- **Guar and xanthan gums**—These sound just dreadful, don't they? But they're in lots of your favorite processed foods, so how bad can they be? They're forms of water soluble fiber, extracted and purified. Guar and xanthan are both flavorless white powders, and their value to us is as low-carb thickeners. Technically speaking, these are carbs, but they're all fiber—nothing but.
Those of you who read *500 Low-Carb Recipes* know that I used to recommend putting your guar or xanthan through the blender with part or all of the liquid in the recipe to avoid lumps. You may now happily forget that technique. Instead, acquire an extra salt shaker, fill it with guar or xanthan and keep it handy. When you want to thicken the liquid in your slow cooker, simply sprinkle a little of the thickener over the surface *while stirring*, preferably with a whisk. Stop when your sauce, soup, or gravy is a little less thick than you want it to be. It'll thicken a little more on standing.
Your health food store may well be able to order guar or xanthan for you if they don't have them on hand. You can also find suppliers online. Of the two, I slightly prefer xanthan.
- **Ketatoes**—Ketatoes, a low-carb instant mashed potato substitute, has sadly passed from our midst. However, at this writing there is a similar product available called Dixie Carb Counters Instant Mashers that works exactly the same as Ketatoes in my recipes, at least the ones I've tried it in. **Anywhere you see "Ketatoes" in this book, think "Dixie Carb Counters Instant Mashers,"** and

you'll be fine. You can get 'em through the low carb e-tailers, and even through Amazon.com. I get mine from CarbSmart.com. Yes, I have a relationship with them. No, I will not get a kickback if you order some Instant Mashers.

- **Low-carb tortillas**—These are becoming easier and easier to find. I can get them at every grocery store in town. If you can't buy them at a local store, you can order them online. They keep pretty well. I've had them hang around for 3 or 4 weeks in a sealed bag without getting moldy or stale, so you might want to order more than one package at a time.

I use La Tortilla Factory brand because they've got the lowest usable carb count of any I've found, just 3 grams. They're mostly made of fiber! Beware: I have recently seen "low-carb" tortillas with deceptive packaging. The listed serving size turned out to equal only half of one tortilla. That's not a serving, as far as I'm concerned!

- **Low-sugar preserves**—In particular, I find low-sugar apricot preserves to be a wonderfully versatile ingredient. I buy Smucker's brand and like it very much. This is lower in sugar by *far* than the "all fruit" preserves, which replace sugar with concentrated fruit juice. Folks, sugar from fruit juice is still sugar. I also have been known to use low-sugar orange marmalade and low-sugar raspberry preserves.
- **Splenda**—Be aware that Splenda granular that comes in bulk, in a box, or in the new "baker's bag" is different than the Splenda that comes in the little packets. The Splenda in the packets is considerably sweeter. One packet equals 2 teaspoons granular Splenda. All these recipes use granular Splenda.
- **Sriracha**—This is a Southeast Asian hot sauce, and it's taking over the world—*Bon Appetit* magazine declared it The Ingredient of the Year for 2010. Find Sriracha in the international aisle of big grocery stores or in Asian markets—look for the bright-red sauce with the rooster on the bottle.
- **Sugar-free imitation honey**—This is a polyol (sugar alcohol) syrup with flavoring added to make it taste like honey. The two brands I've tried, one by HoneyTree and the other by Steele's, are not bad imitations.

Sugar-free imitation honey is becoming more and more available, and it is a useful product. I can get sugar-free imitation honey here in Bloomington at Sahara Mart, my favorite source of low-carb specialty products, and I've heard from readers that Wal-Mart now carries it. For that matter, many of the low-carb e-tailers carry Steele's brand of imitation honey. It shouldn't be too hard to get your hands on some.

- **Sugar-free pancake syrup**—This is actually easy to find. All my local grocery stores carry it—indeed, many have more than one brand. It's usually with the regular pancake syrup, but it may be shelved with the diabetic or diet foods. It's just like regular pancake syrup, only it's made from polyols (sugar alcohols) instead of sugar. I use it in small quantities in a few recipes to get a maple flavor.
- **Tofu Shirataki**—Finally! There's a genuinely low carb noodle. Shirataki are a traditional Japanese noodle made from a root called konjac or *konyaku*, sometimes mistakenly translated *yam* or *yam bean*. The konjac root is a rich source of a fiber called glucomannan, and it is that glucomannan fiber that forms the bulk of shirataki noodles.

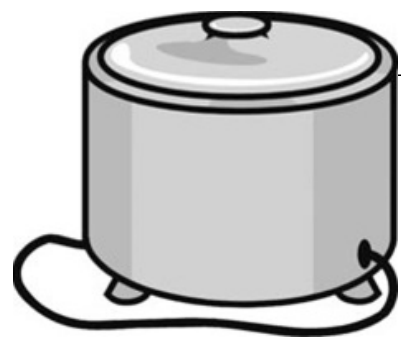
Shirataki come in two basic varieties: traditional shirataki and tofu shirataki. Traditional shirataki are translucent and gelatinous and very . . . well, Asian. They're good in Asian dishes but pretty weird in Western-style recipes. Tofu shirataki are white, considerably less chewy, and good in a wide variety of applications. My local health food stores carry them in three widths: fettuccin

spaghetti, and angel hair. I keep the fettuccine and spaghetti widths on hand.

—~~Shirataki come pre-hydrated in a pouch full of liquid. This makes them perfect for our super-~~quick recipes because you don't have to cook them, only drain and heat them. Snip open the pouch and dump them in a strainer in the sink. You'll notice the liquid smells fishy; you'll want to rinse them. After that, I put them in a microwaveable bowl and give them 90 seconds on high. More liquid will cook out of them, so I drain them again, heat for another 90 seconds, and drain yet a third time; then I add whatever sauce I like. This keeps the liquid cooking out of the noodles from diluting the sauce.

Shirataki keep up to a year in the fridge, so feel free to stock up.

- **Vege-Sal**—If you've read my newsletter, *Lowcarbezine!*, or my previous cookbooks, you know that I'm a big fan of Vege-Sal. It's a salt that's been seasoned, but don't think "seasoned salt." Vege-Sal is much milder than traditional seasoned salt. It's simply salt that's been blended with some dried powdered vegetables. The flavor is quite subtle, but I think it improves all sorts of things. I've given you the choice between using regular salt or Vege-Sal in many recipes. Don't worry, they'll come out fine with plain old salt, but I do think Vege-Sal adds a little something extra. Vege-Sal is made by Modern Products, and it is available in health food stores.



chapter on

Slow Cooker Snacks and Hot Hors D'oeuvres

Slow cookers are mostly used for cooking dinner while you're out of the house, but they have other uses, such as keeping hors d'oeuvres and dips hot through your whole party! Plus your slow cooker will do the best job of roasting nuts ever. Here are some ways you can make your slow cooker the life of the party.



Glazed Chicken Wings

Put out a pot of these and a big ole pile of napkins and watch your guests eat!

3 pounds (1.4 kg) chicken wings

1/2 cup (168 g) sugar-free imitation honey

1/2 cup (12 g) Splenda

1/2 cup (120 ml) soy sauce

2 tablespoons (28 ml) oil

2 cloves garlic

2 tablespoons (28 g) *Dana's No-Sugar Ketchup* (see recipe [page 332](#)) or purchased low-carb ketchup

Cut the chicken wings into “drumettes.” Season them with salt and pepper and put them in your slow cooker.

In a bowl, stir together the honey, Splenda, soy sauce, oil, garlic, and ketchup. Drizzle the mixture over the wings and stir them to coat. Cover the slow cooker, set it to low, and let it cook for 6 to 8 hours.

Yield: 8 servings, each with: 144 calories, 10 g fat, 10 g protein, 2 g carbohydrate, trace dietary fiber, 2 g usable carbs. (Analysis does not include the polyols in the imitation honey.)



Maple-Mustard Wings

3 pounds (1.3 kg) chicken wings

Salt and pepper

1/4 cup (80 g) sugar-free pancake syrup

1/2 cup (125 g) *Dana's "Kansas City" Barbecue Sauce* (see recipe on [page 335](#))

2 tablespoons (22 g) brown mustard

1 garlic clove, crushed

1 teaspoon lemon juice

If you didn't buy your wings already cut up, cut them into drumettes. (If you stash the bones in the freezer to make bone broth, add the pointy wing tips to the bag; they're wonderful.) Salt and pepper your wings and lay them on your broiler rack. Now broil them, 4 to 5 inches (10 to 13 cm) from the heat, maybe 4 to 5 minutes per side.

While they're broiling, mix together everything else.

When the wings are browned a bit, use tongs to transfer them to the slow cooker. Pour the sauce over them and stir to coat.

Cover the pot, set on low, and let them cook for 4 to 5 hours. Serve from the slow cooker, with plenty of napkins!

Yield: If 5 people share these, each will get: 368 calories, 25 g fat, 28 g protein, 6 g carbohydrate, 1 g dietary fiber, 5 g usable carbs. (Analysis does not include the polyols in the sugar-free pancake syrup)

Cranberry-Barbecue Meatballs

Boring old ground turkey does a Cinderella turn and comes to the party in this dish!

2 pounds (900 g) ground turkey

2 eggs

4 scallions, minced

2 tablespoons (28 ml) soy sauce

1/4 teaspoon orange extract

1/2 teaspoon pepper

1 teaspoon Splenda

1/4 cup (60 ml) oil

1 cup (250 g) low-carb barbecue sauce (see recipe [page 335](#) or purchase)

1 cup (120 g) cranberries (These are strictly seasonal, but they freeze well.)

1/4 cup (6 g) Splenda

In a big mixing bowl, combine the turkey, eggs, and scallions.

In another bowl, mix together the soy sauce, orange extract, pepper, and 1 teaspoon Splenda and pour into the bowl with the turkey. Now use clean hands to smooch it all together until it's very well blended. Make 1-inch (2.5 cm) meatballs from the mixture.

Heat half the oil in a big, heavy skillet over medium heat. Brown the meatballs in a few batches, adding the rest of the oil as needed. Transfer the browned meatballs to your slow cooker.

In a blender or food processor with an S-blade, combine the barbecue sauce, cranberries, and 1/4 cup (6 g) Splenda. Run it until the berries are pureed. Pour this mixture over the meatballs. Cover the slow cooker, set to low, and let it cook for 5 to 6 hours. Serve hot from the slow cooker with toothpicks for spearing!

Yield: 48 meatballs, each with: 44 calories, 3 g fat, 4 g protein, 1 g carbohydrate, trace dietary fiber, g usable carbs.

Colombo is the Caribbean version of curry, and jerk is the notoriously fiery barbecue marinade from Jamaica. The heat of this recipe is best controlled by choosing your hot sauce wisely. Use Tabasco sauce, or Louisiana hot sauce, and they'll be spicy. Use Jamaican Scotch Bonnet sauce, or habanero sauce, and they'll take the top of your head right off!

- 1 pound (455 g) ground lamb
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup (40 g) minced onion
- 1/4 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/4 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1/8 teaspoon anise seed, ground
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon dry mustard
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon Splenda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons (28 ml) olive oil
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/4 cup (40 g) minced onion
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 tablespoon (8 g) grated ginger root
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) soy sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon (1.5 g) Splenda
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1/4 cup (60 g) low-carb ketchup
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) lime juice
- 1 1/2 teaspoons hot sauce

In a big mixing bowl, add the lamb, egg, 1/4 cup (40 g) minced onion, coriander, turmeric, anise seed, minced garlic, dry mustard, 2 teaspoons lemon juice, 1/2 teaspoon Splenda, and salt. Using clean hands, moosh it all together till it's well blended. Then make 1-inch (2.5 cm) meatballs, pressing them together firmly.

Heat the oil in a big, heavy skillet over medium heat and brown the meatballs in two batches. Drop the bay leaf in the bottom of the slow cooker and then put the meatballs on top of it.

Mix together the second 1/4 cup (40 g) minced onion, the allspice, ginger, soy sauce, thyme, cinnamon, 1 tablespoon (1.5 g) Splenda, crushed garlic, ketchup, 1 tablespoon (15 ml) lemon juice, lime juice, and hot sauce. Pour this sauce evenly over the meatballs. Cover the slow cooker, set it to low, and let it cook for 3 hours. Remove the bay leaf. Serve hot from the slow cooker.

Yield: 35 servings, each with: 48 calories, 4 g fat, 2 g protein, 1 g carbohydrate, trace dietary fiber, 1 usable carbs.



Easy Party Shrimp

How easy is this? Yet your guests will devour it. If you can't find the crab boil spices in the spice aisle at your grocery store, ask the fish guys. They should know where it is.

- 1 envelope (3 ounces, or 85 g) crab boil spices
- 12 ounces (355 ml) light beer
- 1 tablespoon (18 g) salt or Vege-Sal
- 4 pounds (1.8 kg) easy-peel shrimp or frozen shrimp, unthawed

Drop the crab boil spice net bag in your slow cooker and pour in the beer. Add the salt or Vege-Sal and stir. Add the shrimp. Add just enough water to bring the liquid level up to the top of the shrimp. Cover the slow cooker, set it to high, and let it cook for 1 to 2 hours until the shrimp are pink through. Set the pot to low.

Serve the shrimp straight from the slow cooker with low-carb cocktail sauce, lemon butter, or mustard and mayo stirred together for dipping. Or heck, serve all three. This is enough shrimp for a good-sized party, at least 15 or 20 people, if you're serving it as an hors d'oeuvre/party snack.

Yield: 20 servings, each with: 101 calories, 2 g fat, 18 g protein, 1 g carbohydrate, 0 g dietary fiber, 1 g usable carbs. (Analysis does not include any dipping sauces.)



Zippy Cocktail Dogs

Here's an easy way to jazz up little cocktail wieners.

- 1/4 cup (60 g) *Dana's No-Sugar Ketchup* (see recipe [page 332](#)) or purchased low-carb ketchup
- 1/4 cup (6 g) Splenda
- 1/2 teaspoon blackstrap molasses
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) bourbon
- 1/2 pound (225 g) cocktail-size hot dogs

In a large bowl, stir together the ketchup, Splenda, molasses, Worcestershire sauce, and bourbon.

Put the hot dogs in the slow cooker and pour the sauce over them. Cover the slow cooker, set it to low, and let it cook for 2 hours; then uncover and cook for 1 more hour. Serve with toothpicks for spearing.

Note: If you can't get cocktail-size hot dogs, use regular hot dogs cut in chunks. They're not as cute, but they should taste the same!

Yield: 6 servings, each with: 158 calories, 11 g fat, 5 g protein, 4 g carbohydrate, trace dietary fiber, 4 g usable carbs.



Horseradish Smokies

My husband loved these!

1 pound (455 g) small smoked sausage links

1/4 cup (60 g) *Dana's No-Sugar Ketchup* (see recipe [page 332](#)) or purchased low-carb ketchup

1/3 cup (8 g) Splenda

2 tablespoons (30 g) prepared horseradish

1/4 teaspoon blackstrap molasses

Put the sausage in your slow cooker.

In a bowl, mix the ketchup, Splenda, horseradish, and molasses. Pour the sauce over the sausage. Stir to coat the sausage. Cover the slow cooker, set it to low, and let it cook for 3 hours. Serve the sausage hot from the slow cooker with toothpicks for spearing.

Yield: 8 servings, each with: 193 calories, 17 g fat, 8 g protein, 1 g carbohydrate, trace dietary fiber, g usable carbs.



Orange Smokies

Put these out at your next Super Bowl party and watch people eat!

1 pound (455 g) small smoked sausage links

1/4 cup (60 g) *Dana's No-Sugar Ketchup* (see recipe [page 332](#)) or purchased low-carb ketchup

1/4 cup (60 ml) lemon juice

2 tablespoons (3 g) Splenda

1/4 teaspoon orange extract

1/4 teaspoon guar or xanthan (optional)

Put the sausage in your slow cooker.

In a small bowl, stir together the ketchup, lemon juice, Splenda, and orange extract. Thicken the mixture just a little, if you think it needs it, with guar or xanthan. Pour the sauce over the sausage. Cover the slow cooker, set it to low, and let it cook for 3 hours. Keep the sausages hot in the slow cooker to serve.

Yield: 8 servings, each with: 193 calories, 17 g fat, 8 g protein, 1 g carbohydrate, trace dietary fiber, g usable carbs.

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