

Words on Wellness

Slow Cooker: Your Best Friend for Plant-based Meals

Slow cookers are popular and an easy dinner option. Slow cooking is exactly what it sounds like—a process of cooking slowly. Using a slow cooker can retain some of the nutrients typically lost when frying or boiling.

Plant-based slow cooker meals focus on foods primarily from plants. This includes not only fruits and vegetables, but also nuts, seeds, oils, whole grains, legumes, and beans. Plant-based meals are a great way to focus on choosing foods from plant sources, but that doesn't mean you have to stop eating meat and dairy.

Research has shown plant-based diets reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, certain cancers (specifically colon, breast, and prostate cancer), depression, and a decreased risk of frailty, along with better mental and physical function.

Here are a few tips to get started with a plant-based slow cooker meal:

- Add a whole grain with root vegetables, like potatoes and turnips, for soups and stews.
- Try dry beans for soups and stews.
- Layer vegetables, starches, and sauces for a casserole-style meal.
- Use a variety of herbs and spices to add flavor.

Enjoy a nutritious and delicious plant-based recipe perfect for slow cooking at [Spend Smart. Eat Smart.](https://www.spendsmart.iastate.edu/FR22GX), go.iastate.edu/FR22GX.

Source: [Harvard School of Public Health](https://www.harvard.edu/oy SCUO), go.iastate.edu/OYSCUO

Flu Shot Time!

Wintertime is flu season, and getting your influenza vaccine (flu shot) in the fall is the best way to prevent the flu and its complications. It can take nearly two weeks to build immunity after a shot.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov), cdc.gov, recommends an annual flu shot for everyone age 6 months and older. It can lower your risk of having serious illness from the flu and the need for a hospital stay. You can still protect yourself against late flu outbreaks even if you get the flu shot in February or later in the season.

Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about getting the flu shot or visit your local public health office for more information.

Slow Cooker Black-eyed Pea Soup

Serving Size: 1 1/2 cups | Serves: 5

Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound dried black-eyed peas
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup water
- 6 carrots, chopped
- 2 ribs celery, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon seasoning (basil, dried oregano, rosemary, or sage)

Directions:

1. Rinse and sort dry black-eyed peas to remove any dirt or debris.
2. Place all the ingredients in the slow cooker and mix.
3. Cook on low for 8 hours.

Nutrition information per serving:

200 calories, 1.0g total fat, 0g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 0mg cholesterol, 450mg sodium, 39g total carbohydrate, 8g fiber, 9g sugar, 12g protein. This recipe is courtesy of ISU Extension and Outreach's Spend Smart. Eat Smart. website. For more information, recipes, and videos, visit spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu



Smart Habits Mean Savings

Healthy eating doesn't have to be expensive. While we can't do much about food prices, we can learn to shop smarter and make our food dollars stretch further.

Meal planning will allow you to spend less time in the grocery store and save you money. Create your shopping list and stick to it. Start by finding meals you would like to prepare, add ingredients you already have on hand (fridge, freezer, pantry), and look for special buys.

Purchase fresh produce in season or "less-than-perfect" produce at a reduced price. Avoid prewashed and precut produce, which is priced higher.

For meats, buy the whole piece or bulk packages and cut up or divide it at home. Stretch your ground meats by adding bread crumbs, herbs, eggs, or plant protein (tofu or textured vegetable protein).

Take advantage of weekly sales and deals. Don't overlook in-store promotions or the store's website. Track prices on the products you buy frequently. After a while, you will be able to spot a good price and stock up. Go to Spend Smart. Eat Smart., spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/plan/shopping-tools/, for more money-saving tips.

Sources: [NCOA](https://ncoa.org/), go.iastate.edu/LFSA2J

[The University of Maine Cooperative Extension](https://go.iastate.edu/KV3KLL), go.iastate.edu/KV3KLL



Find Your Movement Motivation

Starting a physical activity routine and sticking to it can be challenging. Finding the motivation to stay active is key.

Most results of exercise are not instantaneous, so set realistic goals. Start small and gradually increase to 30 minutes of exercise five days per week. People keep exercising because they have found something they enjoy. If exercise feels like a chore, it can hold you back from accomplishing your exercise goals.

People who are physically active tend to live longer, healthier lives. Research shows moderate physical activity—such as 30 minutes a day of brisk walking—significantly contributes to longevity. Always consult with your health care provider before starting an exercise program.

Source: [American College of Sports Medicine](https://www.acsm.org/), go.iastate.edu/M4SDGB

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If you or someone you know is skipping meals, going hungry, or choosing between food and medicine, call 1-855-944-3663 to apply for assistance today.

Call Iowa 2-1-1 or Iowa Lifelong Links, 1-866-468-7887, for additional resources.

