

Baked Beans . . . in a Crock Pot

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by Lydia Lovell

In an earlier era the only room in the house that could be counted warm all winter long was the kitchen. And it was the kitchen where most of the action took place. No sooner were family members awake and dressed each day than they hurried down to its cozy comfort.

Uncle Henry was usually the first person up in the morning. He shook down the ashes, opened the draft and the damper, and added a fresh supply of fuel to the fire. Within minutes the kitchen was warm and the family was gathering for breakfast. All meals, except those served on holidays or very special occasions, were eaten at the kitchen table.

There, too, bread was kneaded, cakes mixed, piecrust rolled, vegetables prepared, fruits picked over, and meats and fowl trussed for roasting. At the kitchen table we trimmed lamps, did our homework, shined our shoes, and read the newspapers. When a neighbor dropped in another chair was drawn up and the tea kettle moved to the front of the stove to set the water boiling.

Everybody, in those days, expected Saturday night supper to be baked beans from a beanpot that spent most of the day in the stove's spacious oven. Modern kitchens, lacking stoves that burn night and day, may come equipped instead with a crock pot . . . an excellent substitute. Aunt Olivia's recipe for **Baked Beans** can be adapted to crock pot cooking with delicious results.

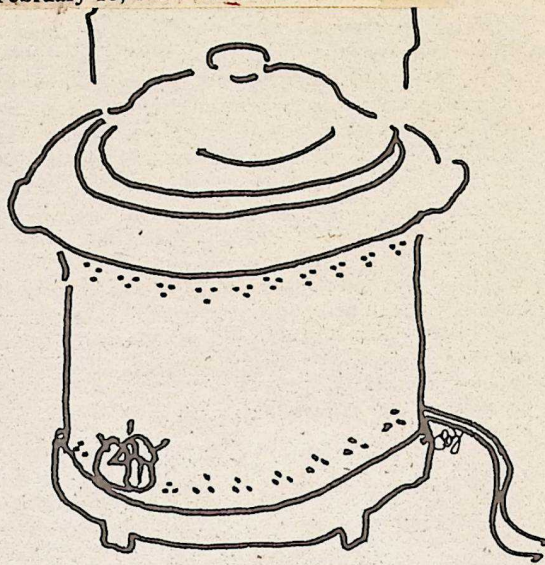
2 C. (1 lb.) yellow eye, navy, or small white beans
1/4 C. molasses
1/4 lb. salt pork, divided in half
1 small onion
2 t. dry mustard
3 T. brown sugar (or maple syrup)

Wash beans and soak overnight in enough water to cover. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer about one hour or until the skins of a spoonful of beans scooped from the water break and curl when you blow on them gently. Drain in a sieve, saving two cups of the cooking water.

Peel the onion and place with half the salt pork in the bottom of the crock pot. Pour in the beans. Combine remaining ingredients with two cups of reserved cooking water. Pour over beans. Score other piece of salt pork and place on top. Cover and cook on crock pot base at medium setting for five hours. Do not stir. Add water only as needed to keep beans barely covered. During last hour of cooking do not add any water.

Serving brown bread with baked beans is another New England tradition but, alternatively, consider cornbread or pumpernickel. A big bowl of cole slaw will then complete your menu. If you have a food processor, making **Carrot and Cabbage Slaw** takes only a few buzzes and a whisk of mayonnaise. Some people like a bit of raw onion in slaw; sometimes I use a celery stalk or two. A light hand with seasoning improves flavors; for variety, a tablespoon or so of juice from a sweet pickle jar adds piquancy.

When Aunt Olivia prepared cole slaw, time for grating carrots, dicing celery and onion, and slicing a head of cabbage to paperthin shreds often came in the early afternoon. One reason her slaws were especially tasty was the extra hours they spent on ice while flavors blended. Taking a page from her book, I mix slaw well ahead of mealtimes even though the food processor permits five-minute preparation.



Getting the most use from a food processor can be a challenge in itself. As a time-saver, you can't beat it. The machine slices, minces, dices, grinds, grates, chops, shreds, mixes, creams, blends, kneads, and crumbs. It does any of these things in seconds. But you must learn which blade gives the desired results, how long to process different materials, and what happens if you chop with the steel blade instead of shredding with the shredder or slicing with the slicer.

Types of processors number in the dozens today, and each one varies in capacity and results. Following manufacturer's instructions is essential to success; the only way you can grow familiar with the versatility of your own particular machine is through experience. Once you know what it will do for you, your old recipes can be adapted to new uses.

Most processors, for example, will make bread dough in a matter of minutes, but some models can handle only enough dough to make one loaf. Your recipe for bread may need to be halved if you use a processor; you may mix up two batches and combine them.

Note to Mrs. Juliet N. Boudreau:

Please note the **correct** list of ingredients for Aunt Olivia's "Cream of Tartar" Biscuits:

4 C. flour
3 heaping t. baking powder
2 t. sugar
1/2 t. salt

Shortening the size of a large egg

2 C. milk, more or less

I apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused. I'm not sure **why** Aunt Olivia called them "Cream of Tartar" biscuits. Thanks for your interest in the column!

—Lydia Lovell

A few helpful hints and standardized proportions for making bread dough may make it easier to divide your recipes. Process dry ingredients with butter, oil, or margarine before adding other ingredients. Add liquid to flour and shortening mixture while machine is running, pouring it slowly through the chute in a steady stream. Each cup of flour needs 1/2 cup of liquid; for every large egg used, reduce other liquid by 1/4 cup.

Aunt Olivia would never have believed her **Indian Meal Cheese Bread** could be mixed, kneaded, and set to rise in less than five minutes but, with a food processor, it is possible. This bread is particularly delicious with baked beans.

Dissolve 1 pkg. active dry yeast in 1/4 C. of warm water. Set aside. With shredder disc in food processor, shred 3 oz. sharp cheddar cheese using light pressure on pusher. Leave cheese in bowl; replace shredder disc with plastic blade. Add 4 C. unbleached all-purpose flour, 1/2 stick butter or margarine (soften to room temperature and cut into 4 pieces), 2 T. sugar, and 1 t. salt. Cover and process for 20 seconds. Remove cover and add yeast mixture, 2 large eggs, and 5 drops of Tabasco sauce. Measure one cup of ice water. Replace processor cover.

Turn on machine; pour ice water through chute in a steady stream as fast as flour mixture will absorb it. This should take about half a minute. Turn off machine. Remove cover and add 1 C. yellow cornmeal. Replace cover and run machine until dough begins to form a ball; let machine continue to run for about one minute to knead dough. Turn off machine and remove bowl from base.

Grease an ordinary mixing bowl and two six-cup loaf pans. Set pans aside. Grease hands. Remove dough from processor bowl and shape into a smooth ball. Place dough in greased bowl, cover with a sheet of waxed paper and a tea-towel, and let rise in a warm place until dough doubles, about 1 1/2 hours. Punch dough down, divide in two, shape into smooth loaves, and put in greased pans. Again cover with waxed paper and towel; allow to rise in warm place until dough is just above top of pans (about an hour).

Bake in preheated 375° oven 35 to 40 minutes on middle rack. Remove from pans and cool on wire racks. If soft crust is desired, butter tops while hot. Makes two one-pound loaves.

On Saturday nights Aunt Olivia often served this Indian Meal Cheese Bread, baked beans, and Carrot and Cabbage Slaw. So satisfying was the menu that we were likely to delay eating dessert until time for a bedtime snack. At the evening's end, Uncle Henry banked the fire, adjusted the damper and draft to keep the stove at its lowest operating temperature throughout the long winter's night, while we slept between cotton flannel sheets under blankets and quilts