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INSTANT POT TECHNIQUES, TIPS & RECIPES

Make your Instant Pot Work for You!



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Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of the Instant Pot! It's gotten a lot of hype over the last couple years- for good reason. It really can do just about anything.

Although it can seem a bit daunting to use at first, it really becomes quite simple once you give it a try. Be sure to check out the tutorial about how to get the darn thing out of the box and get it ready for cooking on the next page - it's so easy, a kid could do it. ;)

This helpful little guide will take it from there for you, with Basic Instant Pot Techniques that will change the way you hard boil eggs, cook squash, and make whole chickens. You can even cook FROZEN ground beef with no fuss.

I've shared some of our Instant Pot recipes too, but not all of them- we add more often, so check [here](#) for the latest.

And finally, I know that sometimes you don't WANT a new recipe, you just want something familiar. Good news! Your IP can make almost any of your favorite slow cooker recipes too - just use the strategies in that section to convert it without much thinking at all.

Before you know it, your Instant Pot will become indispensable!

Remember to ALWAYS READ THE COMPLETE MANUAL that came with your appliance as well.

Bon Appetit,

Katie Kimball

Disclaimer: Please read the owner's manual that came with your appliance, and follow the instructions in the manual before any directions I provide in this guidebook. The Instant Pot has a lot of safety features built in, but you are responsible for using it according to the manufacturer's instructions. I cannot be held liable for any accidents, injuries, or messed up dinners.

What Is a Pressure Cooker?

An Instant Pot is technically a “multi-cooker” appliance, a totally new category as of a few years ago for testing and awards. This means it does many things, but the function that sets it apart from slow cookers and rice cookers and yogurt makers is that it’s an electric pressure cooker. It works by trapping steam inside until pressure is built up – the opposite of the loss of pressure as you climb a mountain.

To make it clear, the air molecules get farther apart as altitude increases, decreasing air pressure (and making it harder to breathe and food take longer to cook). Inside an Instant Pot, the air molecules are closer together, more dense, so the pressure is higher – food cooks faster simply because the boiling point of water increases.

You could boil water all day long and it won’t get above 212F – but inside a pressure cooker it boils at 235F, possibly up to 250F. Cooking food in hotter water cooks it faster – it’s as simple as that!

Also “wet” and “direct” heat in cooking transfers heat faster: think sautéing vs roasting veggies. Sautéing in a frying pan over direct heat is much faster than roasting, when the heat is coming from all side but isn’t direct.

We don’t need to worry about all this being unhealthy or unsafe – 250F is still lower than most oven baking/roasting, so it’s not like we’re using abnormally or unnaturally high heat – it’s similar to a slow cooker as far as temperature overall. [*More info on how a pressure cooker works from Hip Pressure Cooking, an excellent resource!*](#)

To recap, the Instant Pot is wet, direct heat, at a higher temp than is possible at normal atmospheric pressures – all of those things make it cook FAST! And *that’s advantage #1* why people really love their Instant Pots.

How to Unbox Your Instant Pot

The unboxing process should be the same or doggone close no matter what model/size you have. You should **always read the complete manual** that comes with your electric pressure cooker.

If you'd rather see these steps in action, my kids demonstrated how to unbox our second Instant Pot- [check that out here](#).

1. **Take it out of the box** and take the packaging off.
2. **Take all the parts out of the pot** and the plastic off.
3. Get the little paper out from under the pot by lifting up the pot.
4. Pull the valve straight up to take it off (you won't break it!) and get the string/tag off if it's there.
5. Put the valve back on.
6. **Check the sealing ring for cracks** or issues by pulling it out of the lid. Just pull hard, it's not fragile but it might be tight!
7. **Put the ring back** in. Promise, it's not rocket science and there isn't an "up" or "down" side.
8. **Slide the condensation collector on.** Look on the back side of your Instant Pot under the part that sticks out for the lid, and slide the thin, clear plastic cup thingy straight on. If it stays and it's straight, it's correct.
9. **Peel the clear covering off the button panel.** It won't hurt to leave it on, but a lot of people (me included) forget this part and then later as it gets condensation under it, they think their machine is having a big problem. #notfun
10. **Put the inner pot back in the machine. Pour in 2 cups of water.** (We teach pouring skills to 2-5-year-olds in our [Kids Cook Real Food eCourse](#)!)
11. **Lock in the lid** – just line it up in that larger section of the appliance and twist clockwise. You'll [hear a fun noise](#) and know you've done it right.
12. Make sure the **valve is closed** (pointing to "Sealing").

13. Set the Instant Pot for for **2 minutes on high pressure** (many models use the "Manual" button for this).
14. Most Instant Pot models will start on their own after that, but some have a start button as well.
15. After about 10 minutes, the Instant Pot will release steam out of the valve and pin area. That's normal.
16. When the **pin stays up and the steam stops**, the unit is up to pressure and the timer begins counting down.
17. The IP will beep (for a long time!) when the timer is up.
18. You can choose to release the pressure with a "quick release" which means **opening the valve** (carefully!) like my 12-year-old son does [in the video here](#), or you can just let it sit for about 15 minutes and the pressure will naturally release (called a "Natural Pressure Release" or NPR or NR in recipes, by the way). Releasing the pressure is definitely only a job for older kids or adults.
19. Either way, you cannot open the lid until the pin is down and the pressure is released – the unit won't let you turn it. (Safety feature!)
20. When you twist the lid and open it, be cautious of the steam that will come out. We use a technique called "Pac Man the lid" in [our cooking class for kids](#).

Note: Always read the manual that comes with your appliance fully.

That's it! Now your Instant Pot is ready for recipes.

Basic Instant Pot Techniques

Hard Boiled Eggs

Tired of eggs that won't peel? The Instant Pot is a game-changer. Steaming them under pressure helps the white easily release the shell.

- Put a cup of water in the Instant Pot plus the steamer insert.
- Set eggs in the insert.
- Set the pressure cooker to cook for 4 minutes on high pressure, or 6 minutes on low (on an Instant Pot, use the "Manual" button).
- When the pot beeps that it's done, open the pressure valve to release the steam. It takes about 10 minutes to get up to pressure, then about 1 minute to release the pressure.
- Cool in the fridge or eat warm. (If you want to peel right away, douse in cold water so you can touch them.) You won't believe how easy they are to peel!

[Check out Hip Pressure Cooking](#) for more specific instructions for soft, medium, and hard yolks.

Some say the "perfect" hard-boiled eggs happen at 5 minutes high pressure, 5 minutes "natural pressure release" (which means just wait 5 mins and then open the valve), and 5 minutes in an ice water bath. Try that if the simpler method above isn't perfect for you!

Applesauce

- Wash and quarter apples- no need to peel them if you're using a blender or food processor.
- Fill your Instant Pot (not too close to the top – the valve needs to be open to the air). You should be able to see a “fill” line on the inside of your pot.
- Sprinkle on cinnamon to taste as you fill. I like at least a teaspoon for a full pot (but I love cinnamon and often add more).
- Add a cup of water to make sure there's enough to get up to pressure – although the apples will produce a lot of water themselves. Lock the lid and close the valve.
- Cook on high pressure for 10 minutes (use the “Manual” button on an Instant Pot to do this) and use the quick release. The apples will be completely soft and smell wonderful! If you like thicker applesauce (we do), pour off some of the water before whizzing in the food processor or blender or, if you peel your apples, with an immersion blender.
- Store in the refrigerator for 5-7 days or the freezer for 6 months.

Perfect Rice

Brown or white, you can get perfect rice every time in the Instant Pot.

For white rice, just add the appropriate amount of rice and water per package instructions and hit the “rice” button (preprogrammed for 12 minutes on an Instant Pot). Walk away and it’s done when it beeps!

For brown rice, the “multigrain” function is a 40-minute cook time, but the [Instant Pot website](#) says to cook it for 22-28 minutes, so you’ll have to adjust the time on that function.

Steamed Veggies

With the steamer insert in the Instant Pot, you can steam veggies quite quickly – although I'll be the first to say that it's probably not all that much quicker than the stovetop (if at all), and a negative to the process is that you lose some control over just how much they're steamed since you can't be cracking the lid open to check every few minutes.

The upside? It's a no-touch process and frees up your stove for other things, so it's awesome to know how to do it when you're hosting company, need to have freshly steamed veggies somewhere without a stove, or if you just tend to cook a ton of things at once like I do!

- Prepare veggies to steam by cutting into equal sized chunks – shoot large to prevent overcooking.
- Pour one cup water under the steamer insert and arrange veggies on the basket.
- Lock in the lid and make sure the valve is closed.
- Cook for one minute. The Instant Pot's "Manual" button will default to high pressure; if you're steaming less than a whole head of cauliflower or broccoli, something small like green beans, or you simply prefer "al dente" steamed veggies, I would try low pressure for one minute. It will take about 10 minutes to get up to (high) pressure.
- After the one minute cook time, open the valve to quick release the pressure (this will take about 3-5 minutes).
- Remove the steamed veggies (immediately) and serve warm!

Hearty Oatmeal

Steel cut oats have a great texture to them, but take a fair bit of time on the stove. However, you can combine 1 cup of steel cut oats with 3 cups of water and [pressure-cook for just 3 minutes!](#) When the timer is done, allow for a natural pressure release before removing the lid, which will take 10-15 minutes. The oats won't look done at first, too liquidy, but as you stir it all sort of absorbs the liquid and it's perfect. (Serves 2-3)

Safety note: give the whole appliance a little "jiggle" before opening anything thick like oatmeal to make sure any hidden pockets of steam escape.

To make enough for your entire family (plus leftovers) you might try my [Apple Cranberry Steel Cut Oats](#), delicious and festive for a holiday breakfast!

Beans

The Instant Pot manual has an excellent chart for cooking any type of dried bean, both dry and soaked. This tool makes it so easy to have beans in a jiffy without opening a can. [They've got the chart online as well.](#)

Because of health benefits, I still soak the beans overnight, but if I forget and would just use a can of beans anyway, I'm so happy to just use the IP and add some kelp for digestibility and realize that it's way cheaper than the cans, less waste, and at least as healthy if not more-so. It's amazing to know I don't absolutely have to be prepared overnight if I'm going to compromise on a can anyway!

Ingredients:

- about 1 pound dry beans (more if your cooker is over 6qt)
- 1 Tbs oil
- about 8 cups water
- salt to taste, optional

Directions:

1. Pour a one-pound bag or about 3 cups dry beans into a colander.
2. Pick through for rocks and debris.
3. Rinse under running water.
4. Pour into pot.
5. Cover with twice as much water as beans, whether you're soaking or cooking. If cooking, you could measure 4 cups water per cup dry beans.
6. *Optional: Let soak at room temperature overnight or for 12 hours. Drain off water in a colander and rinse beans. Put back into pot and cover with double the amount of water as beans. Proceed with cooking.*
7. Add a Tbs. of oil to the beans (I just use olive oil- the purpose is to reduce foaming.)
8. *Optional: Add up to a teaspoon of salt - this will infuse your beans with great flavor and won't harm the cooking process at all.*

9. Check the sealing ring, lock the lid in place, and close the vent (to "Sealing" on an Instant Pot).
10. Set your pressure cooker (on an Instant Pot, press "MANUAL" or "BEANS/CHILI") and adjust the time manually to fit [the chart here](#). Note that soaked beans cook faster.
11. When the time is up, allow 15-20 minutes for a natural pressure release. (That means no steam will spray out when the valve is opened on any kind of pressure cooker.)
12. Check the beans. When done, they should be soft and pleasant to eat. If they are still a little too firm or crunchy, cook a little longer.

Whole Chicken (or Chicken Breasts)

WHOLE CHICKEN IN THE INSTANT POT

1. Prepare your whole chicken if necessary (like if anything needs to be removed from the inside!).
2. *Optional sauté/browning step - you can just put the chicken in + water and start it up*
3. Press the Sauté button and add some oil to the Instant Pot.
4. When it's hot, put in the bird, breast side down, and brown for 5-7 minutes.
5. Add a cup of water to help the chicken release from the bottom.
6. Carefully flip over.
7. Add any desired seasonings.
8. Press cancel and then cook on high pressure for 35 minutes. You can set this manually or just use the Meat/Stew button (The Instant Pot's "Poultry" button defaults to only 15 minutes, which isn't quite long enough).
9. Let the pressure release naturally, which is easy – just set a timer for another 15-20 minutes after the 35 minutes are up. You'll get some very gelatinous broth around the chicken – save that!

FROZEN CHICKEN BREASTS IN THE INSTANT POT

- 4 frozen chicken breasts
- 1 cup water + 1 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 tsp. salt

Cook on high pressure for 30 minutes with a quick release.

Bone Broth

It's so simple and hands-off to **make your broth in the Instant Pot!** Put the bones right back in after you pick off the chicken, add some onion ends, carrots, celery and garlic, fill the pot to about 2 inches from the top with water, and you're good to go!

- Lock in the lid and make sure the valve is closed.
- The manual says to combine and cook 30 minutes on high, but I did mine for 90 minutes. Either way, your broth will be awesome – and you don't have to play the “will I leave the stove on overnight to make stock or should I refrigerate the carcass after dinner, thus creating more dishes?” game.

I've also done a batch of broth using the slow cooker function, on low heat, for about 8 hours. It was more convenient for me that day to have the broth start in the morning and be finished for dinner time, and it also worked great.

I still make 3 batches with one set of bones. So frugal!

Spaghetti Squash

It can feel like you have the oven on for ages when cooking winter squash. However it's really easy to pressure-cook it!

- Cut your squash in half crosswise.
- Scoop out the seeds and place in your steamer basket with water to the bottom.
- [7 minutes on high pressure](#) and you're ready to eat!

Other winter squash should be about the same, so you could easily prepare butternut, for example, for [these awesome pancakes](#) and store some in the freezer for later!

Cauli "Rice"

Cauli-rice is a [staple in a Whole30 diet](#) – and with the Instant Pot you won't even need to dirty your food processor!

Ingredients:

- 1 medium to large head of cauliflower
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- ¼ tsp. salt (more to taste)
- ½ tsp. dried parsley
- *optional seasonings to play with:*
 - ¼ tsp. cumin
 - ¼ tsp. turmeric
 - ¼ tsp. paprika
 - fresh cilantro

Directions:

1. Wash cauliflower and trim off the leaves. Usually this means you'll chop it into a few large pieces.
2. Put all the pieces into the steamer insert in an Instant Pot (or other pressure cooker).
3. Pour one cup water under the cauliflower and steamer basket.
4. Close and lock the lid. Make sure the valve is closed.
5. Cook for one minute at high pressure. (It will take about 10 minutes to get up to pressure.)
6. After the cook timer beeps, open the valve to quick-release the pressure. (This takes about 2 minutes.)
7. Remove the cauliflower to a plate.

8. Pour out the water in the pot.
9. Return the pot to the cooker and press cancel, then the sauté button.
10. Add the oil to the pot, then the cooked cauliflower.
11. Break up with a potato masher.
12. Add desired spices while stirring and heating. Salt and parsley makes a pretty basic cauliflower ready for any saucy dish on top.
13. Use the optional spices and serve with fresh cilantro and a squeeze of lime juice for a delicious "cilantro lime" version, or try your own! You can shake a few seasonings in, taste it, and keep trying things. Serve warm with any main dish.

Quick Steps of How To Cook Frozen Ground Beef in the Instant Pot

Ingredients

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 1 cup water (or whatever is your pressure cooker's minimum liquid requirement)

Instructions

1. Place a trivet or steam basket inside the liner of your Instant Pot.
2. Add frozen ground beef on top of the trivet, in one big block.
3. Add water beneath the trivet.
4. Lock the lid, close the sealing valve, and select 25 minutes of pressure cooking on high (many models use the "Manual" button for this).
5. Once the program is done, release the pressure immediately (called a 'quick release') by opening the valve. Place a towel over the valve to contain the steam and protect your cupboards if you like.
6. Take the temperature of your meat, using a instant read meat thermometer. Aim for 160F. If the meat is under-cooked, close the lid, seal, and cook for another 5 minutes-- checking again. Repeat if necessary.
7. Remove ground beef with tongs. Use a sturdy spoon to crumble the ground beef
8. Use in your favorite recipe or freeze the meat in pre-portioned bags.

More Details on How To Cook Ground Beef in the Instant Pot

Your IP should have come with a trivet. It's that little metal stand thingy. Can't find yours? You have plenty of options on Amazon, or can even re-purpose your steamer insert. You're going to need it.

Place the trivet in the base of the Instant Pot insert (the meat will not fall through). If you don't have a trivet, this method will still work – you'll just have a slightly different texture of meat because it will be boiling in the water.

Load up your trivet with two pounds of frozen ground beef. Add one cup of water — or whatever is your pressure cooker's minimum liquid requirement.

Put on the lid, move the valve to sealing, and cook for 25 minutes on high pressure.

When the timer is up, carefully release the pressure (called a Quick Release).

Use a meat thermometer to take the interior temperature of your meat. You're aiming for a minimum of 160F. If you find that your beef is still under temp, simply pressure cook another 5 minutes and take the temp again. It's okay to run it for a few minutes longer. If you need to slice your ground beef in half at this point, that's fine, too.

Remove the ground beef using tongs. You'll notice that it stayed together as a log/block and didn't disintegrate. Simply use a sturdy spoon to break into chunks. And now you have fabulous ground beef!

Use your cooked ground beef in spaghetti sauce, homemade hamburger helper, chili, stuffed peppers, Asian stir fry, on baked potatoes, or as a salad topping.

FAQs About Cooking Frozen Ground Meat in the Instant Pot

I thought you shouldn't cook meat from frozen?

Normally, that's true. Cooking meat from frozen can create problems – the outer parts of meat slowly dry out from overcooking while the center remains frozen. Additionally, meat can hang out in the 'danger zone' (that raw limbo between frozen and cooked) for too long, allowing for bacterial growth. But pressure cooking changes that equation.

By coming to heat quickly, raw meat is only in transition for 10-20 minutes – which is not a problem at all. ([source](#))

You can even take this one step further and make [fully-assembled freezer meals](#) that cook straight from frozen in the Instant Pot.

Isn't it best to brown ground beef?

Again, traditional advice says yes. When you brown something, you are shifting the flavor components into high gear – a process called the [Maillard Reaction](#). However, the ground beef turns out totally delicious in the Instant Pot. You won't know the difference!

Doesn't it taste weird?

Nope. Boiling, slow cooking and microwaving all create strange textures. The only ground beef that tastes good is grilled or sautéed. But you can't tell a taste difference between browned and IP-cooked ground beef. It has the same feel, taste, texture, and consistency. The Instant Pot cooks it without any effort on your part. No standing over the stove. No watching the meat.

Can I add onions?

The Instant Pot does have a sauté setting, so you could do up some chopped onions after the meat has cooked (for additional browning).

Does it work with thawed ground beef?

Yes! Start with 10 minutes and then take the internal temperature. Depending on the shape/lump of your meat, you may need a different cooking time.

Does this method work with other ground meats?

Yes! This method does indeed work great with frozen ground meat (turkey, beef, lamb, chicken, pork, etc). Just make sure you test the internal temperature!

How long does the whole process take?

The entire process (putting in ground beef, warming up, at pressure, coming down) takes me about 35- 40 minutes. If you need to really speed things up, you can hit sauté for 5 minutes to bring the water up to boil. Then cancel sauté and proceed with the directions.

Easy Instant Pot Recipes

Curried Lemon Coconut Chicken

Ingredients:

- 1 can full fat coconut milk
- ¼ c. lemon juice
- 1 Tbs. curry powder
- 1 tsp. turmeric
- ½ tsp. salt
- about 4 lbs. chicken- breasts, thighs, or a combo (whatever you have)
- optional: ½-1 tsp. lemon zest

Directions:

- Mix the coconut milk, lemon juice and spices together in a bowl or glass measuring cup. (Don't worry about incorporating that large chunk of coconut cream from the top of the can of coconut milk; just mix the liquidy part together.)
- Pour a little bit on the bottom of the Instant Pot.
- Add the chicken.
- Pour in the rest, including the coconut cream chunk if you've got one, on top of the chicken.
- Lock in the lid and close the valve.
- Turn the IP to "poultry" which should be 15 minutes at high pressure.
- *If working with frozen chicken breasts, add 10 minutes to the cook time and you should be fine (although I haven't tested this yet).*
- It will take about 20 minutes to get to pressure.

- After the 15-minute cook time, use the quick release by opening the valve.
- Test chicken for doneness by cutting open and observing the center (if you see any pink, turn the IP back on for another 5-10 minutes on high pressure it will heat up much quicker because everything is already so hot).
- Use 2 forks to shred the chicken up in the pot (or remove to a plate if you're having trouble getting it all in the pot).
- Optional: Add ½-1 tsp. lemon zest after cooking.
- Serve with steamed or roasted veggies or over rice.

Notes

Recipe adapted from [Pure and Simple Nourishment](#), which was a slow cooker recipe. You can absolutely toss everything in a slow cooker and do 4 hours on high or 8 on low with the same result!

If you'd like the sauce thicker, stir in a Tbs. or two of arrowroot starch after cooking.

Smoky Mexican Chicken Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 green or red pepper, diced
- 2 c. carrots, chopped/diced/shredded (whatever is easiest for you)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 chicken breasts or thighs
- 4 c. [chicken stock](#)
- 2 (14 oz) cans diced tomatoes (or one home-canned quart)
- 1 (7 oz) can [tomato paste](#)
- 2 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- ½ tsp. smoked paprika
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. pepper
- Fresh limes for juice
- toppings: fresh cilantro, red or green onion, shredded cheese, avocado cubes, sour cream

Directions:

1. Turn the Instant Pot to "Sauté" and heat the oil.
2. Add the onion, peppers, and carrots and stir around for 5 minutes or so until they're starting to get translucent and fragrant.
3. Add the garlic for about a minute, just until you can really smell it, stirring constantly.

4. Add all remaining ingredients *EXCEPT for the limes*.
5. Lock the lid in place and make sure the valve is closed.
6. Set to cook on high for 5 minutes (on the Instant Pot use the "Manual" button for this). It will take about 10 minutes for the pressure to build and then the 5-minute-high pressure countdown will begin. *If using frozen chicken breasts, add at least 10 minutes to the time.*
7. When the timer goes off, allow the pressure to naturally release for at least 10 minutes before initiating a quick release (flip the lever on the lid from "seal" to "vent" - be careful of the steam!).
8. Check chicken for doneness (no pink!). It should be done, but if by chance it isn't, you can go for another 5 minutes on high pressure. It won't take as long to heat up, and then do a quick release and check again.
9. Remove the chicken from the pot and shred with two forks. Return to the pot and stir.
10. To serve, squeeze lime juice into each bowl or offer lime wedges at the table along with the optional toppings.

Notes

Can be made in a slow cooker as well – just toss in all the ingredients and cook on low for 8 hours or high for 4 hours. You'll lose a little flavor by not sautéing the onions and garlic first, which you could do in a separate pan.

Whole30 BBQ Boneless Pork Ribs

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbs. olive oil, lard, or other cooking fat
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 2-2.5 lbs. boneless pork ribs ("country style")

For the rub:

- 2 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. white pepper (or black is fine if you don't have white)
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika
- ½ tsp. coriander
- ½ tsp. thyme
- ¼ tsp. allspice

For the sauce:

- 1 c. tomato sauce
- 1 c. stock (beef or chicken) or water
- 2 Tbs. red wine vinegar
- 2 tsp. mustard powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. dried ginger powder

Directions:

1. Turn the Instant Pot on to "Sauté." Add the oil, and when it's hot, add the onion.
2. Stir that around for at least 5 minutes, although 10 would be better to get it brown/caramelized.
3. Meanwhile, mix the spice rub by blending the salt, white pepper, garlic powder, smoked paprika, coriander, thyme, and allspice.
4. If the onions seem to be cooking along too fast, hit the "cancel" button. You can go back to sautéing at any time if you think it needs more.
5. Once the onions look and smell delicious, rub the spice blend on the pork and put it all into the IP on top of the onions. (I plunked the pork in the pot and poured the spices over and moved them around with my spoon because I don't like getting another bowl out and digging my hands into raw meat. Whatever works!)
6. Mix the sauce together in a bowl or glass measuring cup: tomato sauce, stock or water, vinegar, mustard powder, salt, garlic powder, and dried ginger.
7. Pour the sauce into the bottom of the Instant Pot, trying not to pour the spices off your meat.
8. Close and lock the lid and make sure the valve is closed.
9. Press the "Meat/Stew" button, which is 35 minutes on high pressure (with about 15-20 minutes to get to pressure).
10. Allow for natural pressure release at the end of the cook time.
11. The ribs should be just falling apart. Serve over rice, noodles, or mashed potatoes, or for Whole30/Paleo, serve with lots of sautéed or roasted veggies and a big old baked white or sweet potato.
12. You'll have lots of juices leftover, which go awesome on rice as a side dish in a future meal, as a sauce for a veggie sauté, or as the start for a leftover soup with your meat and some other ingredients.

Notes

Just use regular paprika if you don't have smoked. If you have liquid smoke, add that to get more of the BBQ flavor.

Surely could be done in a slow cooker for 8 hours on low. Skip the water/stock as it wouldn't be needed, and sauté the onions separately if you want that flavor (or use dried onion if you don't care!).

Chicken Cacciatore

Ingredients:

- 2-4 Tbs. olive oil or cooking fat
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 bell pepper – any combination of green or colored – diced
- 1 8-10 oz package mushrooms, sliced or diced (diced is more kid-friendly)
- 1/2 c. [chicken stock](#)
- 3-4 lbs. chicken breasts or thighs (this might be between 5-10 pieces depending on the size of your meat)
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- pepper to taste
- 1/2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 4 c. crushed tomatoes (2 15-oz. cans; I used a quart of home-canned diced and pureed it)
- 6 oz. can tomato paste

Directions:

1. Always start your recipes by crushing the garlic – it will release healthful properties as it sits once crushed.
2. Prep at least most of the diced veggies.
3. Turn your IP to “Sauté” and heat the oil until shimmering.
4. Sauté the onions, peppers and mushrooms.
5. Add the garlic last for just a hot minute.
6. Stir in the broth and boil for 2-3 minutes, stirring to scrape up browned yummy-ness on the bottom. (You’re still on the “Sauté” setting.)
7. Set the chicken on top.

8. Season with salt, pepper and Italian seasoning.
9. If you only have diced tomatoes (or whole) puree them briefly with an immersion blender.
10. Pour the tomatoes over the chicken. No need to stir.
11. Scoop the tomato paste out right on top.
12. Press the cancel button to turn off “Sauté.”
13. Lock the lid in place. Check that the valve is set to “Sealing.”
14. Press the “Poultry” button and leave the default 15 minutes. It will take about 15-20 minutes for the IP to come up to pressure to begin the 15-minute countdown.
15. Allow the pressure to come down naturally for at least 5 minutes. Release any remaining pressure and check the chicken for doneness. More chicken will take longer to cook. If any parts are still pink, lock the lid back in and press “Poultry” again, but adjust the time down to 5 minutes. You can use quick release after that and check the chicken again.
16. Serve over pasta, rice, or sautéed shredded cabbage. We like to sauté cabbage, onions and red peppers.
17. You’ll have a lot of sauce left over...we serve it over noodles.

Spicy Chicken Curry in Red Sauce

Ingredients:

- 4 lbs. boneless chicken thighs
- Tomato paste, 2 6-oz. cans or 7-oz. jars
- 2 cans coconut milk
- ½ c. dried minced onion (or 2 c. diced onion)
- 3½ c. tomato sauce, 2 15-oz. cans OR 2 more cans tomato paste plus 2 c. water
- 1 tsp. dried minced garlic
- 3-4 Tbs. curry powder
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. crushed red pepper

Directions:

1. Mix all of the ingredients in the Instant Pot.
2. Cook on the poultry setting (15 minutes on high pressure).
3. Use the natural release method.
4. Serve over rice with steamed vegetables.

Pepper Steak

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbs. cooking oil
- 1-2 lbs. round steak, grass-fed is best
- 3 onions, sliced (reserve one for the end)
- 1-2 Tbs. molasses
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- water to cover, at least 2 cups
- 2+ Tbs. cornstarch or arrowroot starch
- green pepper, cut into strips
- *optional: tomato*

Directions:

1. Sauté 2 of the onions in oil in the Instant Pot using the Sauté button. Set one onion aside.
2. Cut meat into strips.
3. When the onions are caramelized (browned), add meat to onions and stir around on Sauté so that the sides get browned.
4. Press "Cancel" to turn off Sauté and then add the molasses, salt, and black pepper plus enough water to submerge the meat and onions (at least 2 cups).
5. Seal the lid, turn the valve to "sealing" and cook on the Stew/Meat setting (30 minutes at high pressure). Use a natural pressure release when it's finished (i.e. ignore it for 20 minutes).
6. Add the green pepper and the last onion. Press "Cancel" to turn off the automatic "keep warm" function on the Instant Pot, and then "Sauté" to keep the water very hot and give the vegetables 3 minutes or so to just cook crisp-tender.

7. Mix the starch with about 1/4 cup cold water (shake it in a tightly closed jar) and add to the hot water, stirring until thickened. Keep warm but not boiling and serve over hot rice.
(Note: Never use a pressure cooking function when a thickener has been added; those always go in at the end.)

Instant Pot Italian Lentil Dinner (adapted from slow cooker)

Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. dry green lentils
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. brown rice
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ c. [homemade chicken stock](#) (add another cup if not soaking)
- 1 c. tomato sauce (8 oz. can) or 1 6-oz. can tomato paste + extra $\frac{1}{2}$ c. stock (or if you've got some spaghetti sauce open, just use a cup of that!)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. chopped onion or $\frac{1}{4}$ c. dried minced onion
- 1 c. chopped green and/or red pepper
- 2 large or 3 medium carrots, chopped
- 2 c. cooked, shredded chicken
- a few big handfuls of greens
- *optional: other vegetables like broccoli, zucchini, green beans (frozen is fine!)*
- 3 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 2 cloves crushed garlic or $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. garlic powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt
- 1 c. shredded mozzarella cheese

Directions:

1. Combine rice and lentils in the Instant Pot or a separate bowl and cover with water.
2. Allow to soak overnight with the machine turned off (or in the bowl, covered).
3. *Note: If you're not soaking, add another cup of broth to the recipe.*
4. Drain the water off, then add all the other ingredients except the cheese to the Instant Pot and mix well.
5. Set the IP to "Poultry" which defaults to high pressure for 15 minutes (you could also do this using the "Manual" button).

6. Click in the lid and make sure the valve is closed.
7. When the time is up, use the quick release. After the pin goes down (usually about 2 minutes), give the whole appliance a little jiggle to release any potential pockets of steam trapped in the thick food. You can also do a natural release (ignore it for 15 minutes) and the food won't be overcooked.
8. Add the cheese on top and wait 10 minutes on warm to melt it with the lid on, stir it in to melt almost immediately or turn the IP back on at low pressure for 1 minute.
9. Serve with optional warmed spaghetti sauce on top.

Instant Pot Mexican Lentils and Rice

Ingredients:

- ¾ c. dry green lentils
- ½ c. brown rice (or white)
- 1 c. water
- 2½ c. [homemade chicken stock](#)
- 1 c. tomato sauce (8 oz. can) or 1 6-oz. can tomato paste + and extra ½ c. stock
- ¾ c. chopped onion (or a few Tbs. dry minced onion)
- 1 c. chopped green or red pepper
- 1-2 carrots, sliced or shredded
- 2 c. cooked, shredded chicken
- *optional: other vegetables like spinach, broccoli*
- 3 tsp. taco seasoning
- 2 cloves crushed garlic or ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- Dash pepper
- 1 c. grated cheese

Directions:

1. Combine rice, lentils, and water in the Instant Pot following [this rice soaking method](#) (or just water).
2. Allow to soak overnight with the machine turned off.
3. Drain the water off (save some for next time; see method), then add all the other ingredients except the cheese to the pot and give it a stir.
4. Lock in the lid and close the valve.

5. Turn the Instant Pot on to the "Chicken" setting, which is 15 minutes on high pressure. (It will also take about 20 minutes for the IP to get up to pressure).
6. When the 15 minutes are up, you can use either a quick release by opening the valve or a natural release by letting it sit for 15 minutes while you prepare a salad (or play with your kids). The Instant Pot will keep your meal warm as long as you need it to. After the pin has gone down, give the whole appliance a little jiggle to release any potential pockets of steam trapped in the thick food.
7. Sprinkle shredded cheese on top (or stir it in) and close the lid for about 5 minutes to let it melt (or serve cheese at the table for individual plates).
8. Serve warm with salsa and sliced avocados.

Instant Pot Refried Beans

Larger beans never take more than 30 minutes, often only 10-15 if you soak them, according to the [Instant Pot timing chart](#).

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ c. dried pinto, black or red kidney beans, picked over and rinsed
- 6 c. water
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 c. finely chopped onions
- 1 tsp. whole cumin seeds or ½ tsp ground cumin
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- ½ tsp. dried oregano
- ½ c. grated jalapeño jack cheese
- ½ to 3 Tbs. freshly squeezed lime juice

Directions:

1. Cook the beans according to the Instant Pot Timing Chart.
2. Drain the cooked beans. Reserve the cooking liquid to thin the refried beans.
3. Use the Sauté button on the Instant Pot to heat the oil.
4. Add the onions and cumin and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are limp, about 3 minutes.
5. Add the garlic and oregano and cook, stirring frequently, until onions are lightly browned, 2-3 minutes more.
6. Stir in 1 cup of the bean cooking liquid.
7. Lower heat to medium and add half the beans.
8. Use a potato masher or fork (or immersion blender) to mash them.

9. Add remaining beans and mash. You can leave the mixture quite chunky, with some beans intact, or continue mashing until fairly smooth.
10. Stir well and make sure the beans are thoroughly heated.
11. When most of the liquid has been absorbed, turn off the heat by pushing the Sauté button again.
12. Stir in the cheese, 2 Tbs. lime juice, lime zest, and salt to taste.
13. Add more lime juice, if needed, to create a citrus edge.
14. Serve hot, with a sprinkling of grated cheese.

How to Convert Slow Cooker Recipes for an Instant Pot

Before you start messing with recipes, you need to understand pressure cooker timing. For the Instant Pot, a 30-minute timer means about 20 minutes to get to pressure (could be less depending on how full it is, but if you're making a whole main dish, expect 20 minutes), plus the 30 minutes at pressure, plus typically a natural release which may take up to 15 minutes.

So yeah...30 minutes actually means an hour, but once it's all in the pot you don't have to touch it, and that's much shorter than 4 hours in a slow cooker!

There are just a few rules of thumb to follow to make sure your slow cooker recipe will be successful in an Instant Pot:

- If it's a meat-based dish that can be cooked 8 hours on low or 4 hours on high in a slow cooker, it's almost guaranteed that it will be done to perfection in 25-30 minutes in a pressure cooker. You can use the Meat/Stew button on red meats, and it's totally worth trying the Poultry button if it's chicken!
- Super important note: Always always triple check that the vent is set to "sealing" and not "venting" or you'll be sorely disappointed with undercooked food – not to mention late with the meal, worst of all.
- Check your liquid level. The pressure cooker needs at least a cup of liquid to get up to pressure. Many meats will create juices as they cook, but you still should start with a cup of liquid in the bottom to be safe. That may be an adjustment from a slow cooker recipe – for things like roasts, whole chickens, or shredded chicken dishes, they often only require you to add 1/4 cup for slow cooking. You can add water or broth to make it work for the pressure cooker. Very important safety note: "cream of" soups do NOT count as the liquid. They're too thick to properly make steam in a pressure cooker.
- If adding liquid would ruin your recipe, you may still have a few options – (a) put the meat up on the trivet and the liquid below, or (b) boil off the liquid with the "Sauté" button after the meat is done.
- Go with a natural release for meats if you have the time. A natural release simply means that when the machine beeps that the time is up, you let it sit for 10-20 minutes until no steam spurts out when you turn the valve from "sealing" to "venting." This typically will help the meat be more fall-apart tender or easier to shred.

- In a hurry? You can push the limits a little bit. If you have non-frozen chicken for example, and your cooker is half full or less, there's a good chance the meal will be done with the 15-minute Poultry setting and a quick release. (That's about 35 minutes total cook time.) A quick release, by the way, means you open the valve and let the steam shoot out – keep your hands out of the way! Once the steam has subsided, if you open the cooker and the meat isn't done (any pink at all in the case of chicken), you only wasted about 5 minutes. Just lock the lid back on, set the valve to "Sealing," and set the Instant Pot for 5-10 minutes on high pressure (many models use the "Manual" button for this). It won't take as long to get back to pressure because everything is already so hot. Then you play the game: How close was it to done? If it was just a breath away, be bold and open the lid right away (after letting the steam come out by carefully turning the valve to "Venting!"). If it seemed only halfway done, you may want to give it 10 minutes for a natural release before you check. The good news is that once you figure out the timing once, write it down and you're golden next time.
- Remember safety rules: Don't fill a pressure cooker more than 2/3 with food (it needs head space for the steam to build up) and no more than 1/2 if you're cooking with legumes or grains. Add a Tbs. of oil to any dry beans. Never quick release with thicker foods like beans, grains, etc. Never add a thickener or "cream of" soup before pressure cooking – do that at the end.
- This book includes an example that was adapted from an oven-bake dish to a slow cooker meal to the Instant Pot- see the lentils and rice variations above.

Oh – and don't forget that the Instant Pot ALSO has a slow cooker functionality, so if you need to "set it and forget it" earlier in the day, the IP is still your friend, which is particularly nice if you worry about the safety of the material in your crock. The IP is non-reactive stainless steel. It will automatically switch to "keep warm" too so you can be an hour or two later than the timer and it all works out. Love.

Want More?

- My dear friend Wardee at [Traditional Cooking School](#) can do just about anything with her Instant Pot – cakes, bread, main dishes, veggies, even “stacking” multiple kinds of food at once! She runs the most incredible online cooking classes with a total of 11 different topics and usually 2 dozen classes per topic.

[Check out the pressure cooking modules HERE](#) – I guarantee you’ll be impressed. And if you tackle the other classes, like sourdough, cultured dairy, or [einkorn baking](#) (they’re all included in the same membership), you might see a teacher you recognize, cough, cough.

- See photos of the ground beef process [here](#), or get a whole video of it as a VIP member of [Kids Cook Real Food](#).
- If you’re not familiar with an Instant Pot, you can [learn more here](#).
- Nervous how to use yours? Check out [this tutorial](#) to get you started.
- Don’t forget to peruse the entire Instant Pot [Archives and Recipes](#).

**Visit Kitchen Stewardship for
more Instant Pot Recipes, Tips,
and Techniques**

Disclaimer: Please read the owner’s manual that came with your appliance, and follow the instructions in the manual before any directions I provide in this guidebook. The Instant Pot has a lot of safety features built in, but you are responsible for using it according to the manufacturer’s instructions. I cannot be held liable for any accidents, injuries, or messed up dinners.