

Dietician's Corner

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SLOW COOKER MEALS

By Amanda Thul, RD, LD

As a full-time working mom, the evening hours never feel like there is enough time. Now that activities are back in full swing for my kids, the dinner hour gets shorter and shorter. I know I'm not the only one who struggles with still wanting to get a balanced meal on the table and a lack of time to do it. It's times like these, I rely on my slow cooker. Slow cookers work by cooking food at a low temperature (170°F -280°F) for several hours. Because of the long cooking process, it's a great method to cook tougher cuts of meat. The cartilage will break down leaving the meat tender and delicious.

The slow cooking process along with the heat from the crock and the steam destroys the unsafe bacteria present in the food making it a safe cooking method too. Although it is safe under most circumstances, there are a couple things to be mindful of when using a slow cooker.

-Make sure the raw meat you use is thoroughly defrosted before cooking in the slow cooker. Starting with meat that is still frozen will delay the cooking time and cause the food to not be cooked all the way. The meat may sit at an unsafe temperature for too long making an ideal environment for bacteria to grow rapidly and unable to be killed during the cooking process. This is a recipe for foodborne illness!

-Keep the lid securely on unless absolutely necessary. Each time the lid is lifted, the temperature will drop 10-15 degrees and the cooking time is slowed by 30 minutes

-Do not leave cooked food to cool in the crock. Place leftovers in shallow containers and refrigerate.

These slow cooker Cool Ranch Tacos are a staple at our house. It's a great base recipe that you can use for tacos, nachos, or burrito bowls! I will be featuring more balanced, slow cooker meals on my Instagram and TikTok @thebalancedeatingRD. Follow me so you don't miss out!

SLOW COOKER COOL RANCH TACOS

- 2 lbs boneless, skinless chicken breast or thighs
- ¼ cup chicken broth
- 1 package taco seasoning
- 1 package ranch seasoning mix

FOR SERVING:

Your favorite tortillas and taco toppings

STEPS:

1. Add chicken broth and seasonings to crock pot. Mix together
2. Add the chicken to the slow cooker and flip to make sure both sides get seasoned
3. Cook on low setting for 6 hours until tender and cooked through.
4. Shred chicken and put back in the slow cooker.

Have More Questions?

I'd love to help you weed through the nutrition pseudoscience and get to the answer.

Reach me at the hospital at 515-332-7608.

