

Slow Cooking Guidelines

- Always read the manual provided with your slow cooker and individual recipe instructions
- Preheat the slow cooker for up to half an hour before using, subject to advice in the manual
- Fill the slow cooker at least half but no more than three quarters full, checking that any meat is covered by liquid to help it cook thoroughly
- Do not cook frozen meat in the slow cooker – always defrost it fully beforehand
- Do not lift the lid during the cooking time unless specifically staged in the recipe. If the lid is lifted, you may need to add up to a further 20 minutes to the cooking time
- When checking if the food is cooked through properly, ideally test it with a food thermometer (it should reach 75°C)
- Do not use the slow cooker for reheating leftovers. Instead heat leftovers thoroughly in the microwave or on the stove, and only transfer to a preheated slow cooker to keep warm
- Cook less tender cuts of meat on a low setting for longer for the best results
- If using dry herbs, add these at the start of cooking, while fresh herbs should be added near the end. Test the food before serving to see if more seasoning needs to be added
- Remove excess fat from mince and the skin from chicken to reduce fat content. Browning meat isn't essential but will help mince to cook more evenly and will also improve flavour.
- Cut vegetables into pieces of the same size and layer on the bottom of the slow cooker, especially for tougher root vegetables
- Cook rice and pasta separately to the main recipe on the stove and serve separately, or add the cooked rice/pasta towards the end of the cooking time to heat through with the other ingredients
- If there is too much liquid towards the end of the cooking period, spoon out a few tablespoons into a container and add a tablespoon of cornflour to mix into a paste, stir well into the food and leave to thicken in the slow cooker
- After cooking, food may be kept on a warm setting for 2 – 4 hours maximum in the slow cooker before eating (again check instructions in user manual)
- OR transfer leftovers to an airtight container, cool at room temperature as quickly as possible (within a maximum of 2 hours, or 1 hour during hot weather), and then store in a fridge (eat within 2 days) or a freezer (eat within 2 months). Find more information on chilling, freezing and defrosting food at <https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/chilling>
- Be careful – even if food has been stored correctly, if it looks discoloured, slimy or mouldy or smells bad, or you have any concerns at all, do not eat it and dispose of it immediately!

