



MICHAEL TERCHA | CHICAGO TRIBUNE | TNS

The ingredients for a slow cooker bibimbap are easy to come by: chili sauce, vegetables, kimchee and an egg.

# The go-to college appliance

## Put a slow cooker on student's packing list

BY BILL DALEY  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Forget the hot plate, microwave, George Foreman grill and even pots and pans. The humble slow cooker is all college students need to pack this fall to stay well-fed.

"Think about the slow cooker as an all-in-one cooking center," writes Bruce Weinstein in an email. He is co-author with Mark Scarbrough of 2014's "The Great American Slow Cooker Book."

"It's a perfect item for simply heating up canned stuff too," Weinstein added. "But the great thing about the slow cooker is that they can set it all up, even if it's canned soup or canned chili, in the morning, and it's ready when they get back from class anytime."

Indeed, cookbook author Anupy Singla set off to college and grad school armed with slow cookers in three sizes so she could cook the foods she loved. Singla, author of 2010's "The Indian Slow Cooker" among other books, underscores the advantage that the appliance doesn't require "a lot of hands-on time."

Still, while Weinstein notes a slow cooker can double as an ice bucket in a pinch or an air freshener if you cook some cinnamon sticks on high, it has its limitations. Don't expect browning or much precooking. Weinstein wrote, noting recipes should include ingredients "that are ready to go." The freezer and the salad bar are

## Double-Decker Cheeseburger Casserole

Makes 6 servings

**2 pounds lean ground beef, preferably 93 percent lean**  
**1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped**  
**3½ tablespoons Worcestershire sauce**  
**3½ tablespoons Italian-seasoned tomato paste**  
**10 ounces cheddar cheese, grated (about 2½ cups)**  
**1¼ cups whole wheat ziti or regular ziti or penne**  
**3 tablespoons jarred pickle relish**  
**3 tablespoons ketchup**

1. Stir the ground beef, onion, Worcestershire sauce and tomato paste in a large bowl until the meat and onion are slathered in the sauce and tomato paste.  
2. Make even, full layers of the

ingredients in the slow cooker in this order: half the meat mixture, half the cheese, all of the pasta, all of the pickle relish, all of the ketchup, the remainder of the meat mixture, and the remainder of the cheese.

3. Cover and cook on low for 5 hours, or until the cheese has melted and even browned a bit at the edges, and until the casserole is fairly firm to the touch. Can keep on warm for 3 hours.

*Nutrition information per serving: 500 calories, 23 g fat, 12 g saturated fat, 142 mg cholesterol, 28 g carbohydrates, 5 g sugar, 45 g protein, 768 mg sodium, 3 g fiber*  
*Prep: 10 minutes*  
*Cook: 5 hours*

**6. Coffee or tea.** Machines kept at a low temperature setting of around 200 degrees can be used to heat water for both beverages. — *B.W.*

**7. Chili with franks.** Heat three cans of chili in the slow cooker with three to four sliced hot dogs, 2 hours on high or 6 on low. Top with grated cheese. — *B.D.*

**8. Spiced kidney beans.** Put 3 cups dried kidney beans (rinsed) in a slow cooker. Add 1 onion chopped, 2 chopped tomatoes, minced ginger if you have it, 4 minced cloves garlic, 2 to 4 chopped chilies. Season with 4 whole cloves, 2 tablespoons salt, 1 tablespoon cumin seeds and 2 teaspoons each garam masala and turmeric powder. Cook on high for 12 hours, adding ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro about 5 minutes before the end of cooking. — *A.S.*

**9. Hard-cooked eggs.** Fill cooker halfway with water and set on high before going to bed. In the morning, water should be steaming hot. Add eggs, cook 18 minutes. — *B.W.*

**10. Chocolate fondue.** Melt chocolate squares in slow cooker on low, up to a few hours. Stir in enough milk or some other liquid (bottled Brass Monkey, the cocktail, worked for me once in a pinch) to loosen the texture for dipping. Pair with cubed pound cake and chopped fruit. — *B.D.*

And here's a Double-Decker Cheeseburger Casserole recipe from "The Great American Slow Cooker Book" by Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough. No need to cook the pasta beforehand, and feel free to swap out the cheddar for Swiss, pepper jack or Gruyere. Chow-chow or salsa can sub for the pickle relish. The book offers the recipe three ways, depending on the capacity of one's slow cooker. The amounts given are for a 4- to 5½-quart slow cooker.

hours. — *A.S.*

**3. Pulled pork.** Cook a boneless pork loin with a bottle of barbecue sauce for 8 hours on low. Have friends bring the buns and beer. — *B.W.*

**4. Cheesy grits.** An alternative to the usual macaroni and cheese that can be topped with some store-bought, precooked cocktail shrimp. Use 4 parts water to 1 part grits, cook 6 hours and stir in cheese equal in volume to the raw grits before serving. — *M.S.*

**5. Bibimbap.** Cook 2 cups brown rice in 3½ cups hot water for 2 hours on high, 6 hours on low. Stir in as much chili sauce as you like, kimchee if you have it, greens and veggies snagged from the dining hall salad bar, leftover cooked chicken, beef or pork, if you eat meat, and, an optional raw egg (use a pasteurized egg if there are health concerns); toss it all until well mixed. — *B.D.*

going to be the best place to shop, he added.

Now, you might not need three slow cookers, but even one can be amazingly versatile whether you use it in your room (check the dorm rules first) or in a communal kitchen. Here are a few ideas on how to use your slow cooker from Singla, Weinstein, Scarbrough — and me. Check out one of their cookbooks, or surf the Web for how-to info.

**1. Oatmeal.** Get breakfast going the night before, using 1 part steel-cut oats to 4 parts water. Cook 6 hours on low. Use honey packets from the dining hall to sweeten. — *B.W.*

**2. Soup.** Throw 1½ cups dried legumes (lentils, beans, etc.), ½ cup rice and/or grains or seeds (like quinoa), 2 cups chopped vegetables (onions, carrots, celery, tomato), 6 to 7 cups water, and salt and pepper to taste in a slow cooker. Cook on high for about 5

# Chicken and corn quesadillas hit the spot

There are probably only about half a million things to do with chicken and I'm going to add yet one more to the list.

This recipe is another from the Tex-Mex collection that Josephine Belknap sent me a couple years ago. The original recipe called for crab, but Josephine crossed out the word "crab" and added "chicken," which caught my eye. If you like crab then by all means use this recipe with it, but the quesadillas with chicken are tasty and a bit more affordable.

The recipe calls for fresh corn cut from the cob, available now more readily as summer progresses, but I have used frozen kernels I cut from corn I raise and put away in zip-closed bags, and that works just fine. It is best to cook the chicken and shred it a little before stirring it into the cream cheese mixture. You do have to be the kind of person who has cumin, limes and cilantro around as well as 8-inch flour tortillas.



**SANDY OLIVER**  
TASTE BUDS



## Chicken and Corn Quesadillas

Serves: Four

**¼ cup (2 ounces) cream cheese**  
**Juice of half a lime**  
**¼ teaspoon cumin, or to taste**  
**2-3 scallions chopped**  
**1 tablespoon chopped cilantro**  
**1 cup cooked corn kernels**  
**1 cup cooked shredded chicken**  
**½ chopped red bell pepper, optional**  
**4 8-inch flour tortillas**  
**Shredded Monterey Jack cheese**

Mix together the cream cheese, lime juice, cumin, scallions, and cilantro.

Mix the cream cheese, lime juice, cumin, scallions and cilantro.

Add the corn and chicken and red pepper if using and blend.

Warm the tortillas gently on a griddle and spread a quarter or less of the chicken and corn mixture on half of the tortilla.

Sprinkle the cheese over the mixture and fold the tortilla together.

Toast both sides on a griddle, or warm briefly in an oven.

Serve warm.

We always have flour tortillas because, between home-cooked meals, Toby subsists on tortillas, which we call "roll-ups," that he fills with anything from peanut butter or a scrambled egg to cheese or some leftover or other. I own up that they are pretty handy items.

At this point, the cilantro volunteers in the garden. I pick and pick and some always goes to seed anyway, and obligingly self-sows. Starting in fairly early spring through frost, there is cilantro in one form or another in the garden. I love cumin, so always have that in the spice rack. The limes, on the other hand, are a sometimes thing. If I don't have any, I leave it out.

If you have an avocado, you could adorn the top of the quesadilla with guacamole, or merely some sour cream and a bit of salsa.

We really enjoyed these and I hope you do, too.

Send queries or answers to Sandy Oliver, 1061 Main Road, Islesboro 04848. Email sandyloliver47@gmail.com. For recipes, tell us where they came from, list ingredients, specify number of servings and do not abbreviate measurements. Include name, address and daytime phone number. And make sure to check out Sandy's blog at tastebuds.bangordailynews.com.

# The joy of campfire cooking

BY GRETCHEN MCKAY  
PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

It's funny how the days slip away from you.

One minute an entire summer lies ahead, just ripe for the picking. Then you blink and the focus suddenly shifts from beach vacations and hot-weather pastimes like catching lightning bugs and throwing backyard barbecues to back-to-school shopping and (tears) sending kids off to college.

Happily, there's still time to squeeze in one last hurrah before fall unfolds. May we suggest a campfire cookout?

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. What better way to celebrate America's national parks than to go camping in one of them? August is a terrific time to set up camp in one of many state parks. Closer still, why not pitch a tent and build a campfire in your own

backyard? (For ideas, start your search at findyourpark.com.)

Not only is it nice to get out of the air-conditioning and into warm, fresh air but also there's nothing more satisfying than dinner cooked over a bed of hot coals or propane camp stove to a chorus of crickets.

Campfire cooking is fun because 1) it doesn't demand a ton of work; 2) it usually requires only one heavy pan, making for easy cleanup; and 3) it's a happy change from the everydayness of pulling together a meal in your kitchen.

So how do you go about it if your dad wasn't a Boy Scout leader? It's all in the planning.

Camp cookouts work best when you stay true to the Scout motto, "Be prepared!" This requires not only thinking seriously beforehand about what you want to eat for each meal but also how to portion and pack the ingredients into



GRETCHEN MCKAY | PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE | TNS

Loaded campfire pizza.

containers that travel well and require the least amount of work on arrival.

That means prepping as much food as you can beforehand — chopping vegetables, washing fruit, mixing marinades and stirring together sauces — and putting the exact amounts you need for a certain dishes in small containers or sealed plastic bags. Why bring an entire bottle of red pepper flakes when a tablespoon or so spooned into a Tic Tac container will suffice, and do you re-

ally need a 22-ounce bottle of ketchup for four hamburgers? In addition, freeze what's freezable the day beforehand — it will act as its own ice pack.

Simplicity also is key. Good cookout recipes aren't complicated, which is not to say they can't be flavorful or hearty. All you need for a really good steak, for example, is a sizzling hot pan, some mushrooms and butter; breakfast can be as easy as chopped vegetables and sausage

See *Campfire*, Page C2