

PRESSURE COOKERS AND GRASS-FED MEATS

Growing up, the only image I had of pressure cookers was created by Lucille Ball. And it wasn't a pretty picture at all: chicken fricassee plastered to walls and ceiling because the cooker exploded. Who needs that?!



Fast forward to today, and I'm using both stove top and electric pressure cookers weekly for all kinds of dishes: chicken with garlic, chicken mole, short ribs in a rich wine sauce, beef roasts of all kinds, fork-tender brisket, hearty beef stew, 5-bean soup, and more.

I started with a 6-quart model and quickly moved to 8-quart versions because the results were delicious and made enough to freeze for future meals.

Before buying my first cooker, I looked into their safety, impact on nutrition, and available recipes.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Are they safe? Yes. Today's cookers have heavier bottoms, better controls, and include safety features. If you can operate an oven, you can run a pressure cooker.
- Will I lose nutrients because of the high pressures used? No. Nutrient losses are about the same as for regular cooking.* You may actually gain nutrition because cooking times are short, and very little liquid is used.
- Will sauces and gravies be thin and tasteless due to the shorter cooking times? A big NO. I've found that sauces are thick, silky smooth and full flavored.
- Would I really save time? Yes. I save considerable cooking time, but there is still a fair amount of prep time required. I've found it well worth it.

I highly recommend the America's Test Kitchen cookbook, *Pressure Cooker Perfection*. It's a good primer if you're unfamiliar with these appliances. That said, pressure cookers are not hard to use. When it comes to grass-fed beef, pork and chicken, they help open the horizon to lots of great meals. There are now loads of pressure cooker cookbooks on the market.

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* Information sources and findings

- *Cooks Illustrated* magazine
- America's Test Kitchen
- *Consumers Reports*
- Mark Bittman's *How to Cook Everything*
- 2007 study in *Journal of Food Science* Faster: the closed system, uses less water — saves nutrient loss and leaching
 - Example: broccoli preserves 90% of vitamin C compared to steaming (78%) and boiling (66%)
- 1995, *Plant Foods for Human Nutrition*: recommended pressure cooking to preserve ascorbic acid and beta-carotene in spinach and amaranth
- June 2006, *Nestle's Professional Nutritional Magazine*: retention of V C, B1, B2 and B6
 - Boiling 4–75%
 - Steaming 75-90%,
 - Microwaving 75-95%
 - Pressure cooking 90-95%
- Reduces phytic acid and lectins in legumes and grains.
- Acrylamides do not develop because of moist environment in cooker.

Questions? Ideas? I'd love to hear from you.

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