

A New Way to (Slow) Cook

We know what you're thinking: While it's inarguably practical, there's nothing remotely sexy about a slow cooker. **Think again.** That bulky contraption you only break out for Chili Night is one of the most powerful and versatile tools in your kitchen. Because of its supergentle, supereven heat, it makes stews, braises and beans **more flavorful** than the stove or oven ever could. Chefs love them: **Grant Achatz** employs a fleet of slow cookers at Next, and **Christina Tosi** bakes buttermilk cakes in hers. Now it's your turn to plug in and expand your repertoire beyond pulled pork and beef stew. On the following pages, we're upping your slow cooker game with a few **smart tricks**. Your weeknights just got way more exciting.

RECIPES BY SARAH DIGREGORIO PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN KERNICK

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**HUNGRY
FOR MORE?**

Look for Sarah DiGregorio's book *Adventures in Slow Cooking* later this year.



1 **From the Top** Give farro-and-sausage stew the Parmigiano treatment: Add mozzarella and broil until bubbly.

Farro-and-Sausage Parmigiano

Active **30 min**; Total **3 hr**
Serves **4 to 6**

- 3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 yellow onion, chopped**
- Kosher salt and black pepper**
- 1 lb. hot or sweet Italian sausage, casings removed**
- 3 garlic cloves, minced**
- 1 tsp. dried oregano**
- 1 tsp. crushed red pepper**
- ½ tsp. fennel seeds, crushed**
- 1 Tbsp. white wine vinegar**
- 1½ cups (9 oz.) farro**
- One 28-oz. can crushed fire-roasted tomatoes**
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced**
- 1½ cups panko**
- ½ cup chopped parsley**
- 1 tsp. grated lemon zest**

- 2 Tbsp. minced fresh oregano**
- ¾ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano**
- 6 oz. lightly salted fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced**

1. In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Add the onion, season with salt and cook over moderately high heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, 3 minutes. Add the sausage and cook, breaking it up, until cooked through, about 7 minutes. Add two-thirds of the garlic, the dried oregano, crushed red pepper and fennel seeds. Cook until fragrant, 1 minute. Stir in the vinegar, then scrape into a 6-quart slow cooker. Add the farro, crushed tomatoes and 2½ cups of water. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook on high until the farro is tender, 2½ hours. Stir in the scallions.

2. Meanwhile, in a medium skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Add the panko and cook over moderately high heat, stirring, until golden brown, about 3 minutes. Add the parsley, lemon zest, fresh oregano and the remaining garlic. Cook, stirring, until the garlic is tender, 1 minute. Season with salt. Transfer to a plate.

3. Preheat the broiler and position a rack 6 inches from the heat. Scrape the farro mixture into a 3-quart oval baking dish or 4 small baking dishes. Sprinkle with the grated Parmesan and top with the mozzarella. Broil until the cheese is melted and starting to brown, about 5 minutes; rotate the baking dish halfway through broiling. Transfer to a rack and let stand for 10 minutes. Sprinkle with the panko and serve.

WINE Ripe, intense Primitivo from Puglia: 2014 Cantele.

Perfect Slow Cooker Chicken Breasts

Active **30 min**; Total **2 hr 30 min**
Serves **4**

- ¼ cup fine salt**
- ¼ cup sugar**
- 1 lemon, scrubbed and quartered, plus 2½ Tbsp. fresh lemon juice**
- Four 7-oz. skinless, boneless chicken breast halves**
- 3 cups extra-virgin olive oil**
- 3 garlic cloves**
- 2 fresh bay leaves**
- 2 thyme sprigs**
- 1 rosemary sprig**
- ½ tsp. whole black peppercorns**
- Kosher salt**
- 2 large egg yolks**
- Crusty bread and green salad, for serving**

2 **Slow & Low** Poach chicken in seasoned olive oil to make it rich and tender, then use the oil for a delicious aioli.

1. In a large bowl, whisk 5 cups of cold water with the fine salt and sugar until dissolved. Squeeze and add 2 of the lemon quarters to the bowl. Add the chicken, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 6 hours.

2. Meanwhile, add the olive oil to a 6-quart slow cooker along with the garlic, bay leaves, thyme and rosemary sprigs, black peppercorns, 1½ teaspoons of kosher salt and the remaining 2 lemon quarters. Cover and cook on low until the oil registers 200° on an instant-read thermometer, about 1 hour. (The oil can be kept in the slow cooker on low for up to 6 hours.)

3. Remove the chicken from the brine and pat dry; transfer to a plate. Discard the brine. Using tongs, carefully lower the chicken into the warm oil. Cover and cook on low until the chicken registers 155° on an instant-read thermometer, about 40 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the chicken and garlic to a plate. Cover with foil and keep warm. Discard the lemon quarters and herbs. Using a ladle, transfer 1 cup of the infused oil to a measuring cup (do not use the peppercorns) and let cool until just warm, 15 minutes. Reserve the remaining oil for another use.

4. In a blender, puree the egg yolks with the lemon juice, 1 of the cooked garlic cloves and ½ teaspoon of kosher salt until smooth, about 30 seconds. With the machine on, gradually add the 1 cup of cooled oil until creamy, about 1 minute. Season with kosher salt.

5. Slice the chicken and serve with the aioli, bread and salad.

WINE Citrusy Chilean Chardonnay: 2014 Montes Alpha.

FOOD STYLIST: VIVIAN LUI; PROP STYLIST: AYESHA PATEL

Harissa White Bean Stew with Turmeric Yogurt

Active **30 min**; Total **6 hr 45 min**
Serves **4 to 6**

- 3 Tbsp. unsalted butter**
- 1 large red onion, finely chopped**
- 5 garlic cloves, finely chopped**
- Kosher salt**
- ¼ cup plus 3 Tbsp. harissa**
- 3 Tbsp. tomato paste**
- 1 tsp. ground cumin**
- 1 tsp. sweet paprika**
- 1 lb. dried cannellini beans**
- 2 large carrots, sliced ½ inch thick**
- 3 thyme sprigs plus 1½ tsp. fresh thyme leaves**
- 2 fresh bay leaves**
- One 3-inch strip of lemon zest plus 3 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice**
- 2 tsp. ground turmeric**
- 1½ cups full-fat Greek yogurt**
- ½ cup finely chopped parsley, plus leaves for garnish**
- ½ preserved lemon, pulp discarded and rind thinly sliced**

1. In a large skillet, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter. Add the onion and garlic, season generously with salt and cook over moderately high heat, stirring occasionally, until the onion has softened and is starting to brown, about 8 minutes. Stir in ¼ cup of the harissa and the tomato paste and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in the cumin and paprika, then add 2½ cups of water and bring to a simmer, scraping up any browned bits on the bottom of the pan. Transfer to a 6-quart slow cooker along with the dried beans, carrots, thyme sprigs, bay leaves, lemon zest and lemon juice. Add 1 tablespoon of salt and 3½ cups of water. Cover and cook on high until the beans are tender, about 6 hours.



3 **Layer It On** Instead of adding harissa all at once, stir it in at the beginning to build a base, then at the end for a bright pop of heat.

2. Meanwhile, in a small non-stick skillet, melt the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter. Add the turmeric and cook over moderately low heat, stirring constantly, until it dissolves, about 30 seconds. Transfer to a medium bowl and let cool slightly, about 5 minutes. Slowly whisk in the yogurt until smooth. Season with salt.

3. Discard the bay leaves and thyme sprigs from the stew. Just before serving, stir in the thyme leaves, chopped parsley and the remaining 3 tablespoons of harissa; season with salt. Ladle into bowls and garnish with the preserved lemon and parsley leaves. Serve, passing the turmeric yogurt at the table.

MAKE AHEAD The turmeric yogurt can be refrigerated for 2 days. The stew can be refrigerated for 4 days; gently reheat before serving.

WINE Peppery Mediterranean Monastrell: 2015 Bodegas Volver Tarima Hill.