



"This is just weird, mom!"

My Love. My Slow Cooker.

By Holly Pevzner

I possess a deep, deep love of my slow cooker. After coffee, she's my very first thought each Sunday morning, as I groggily sketch out dinner ideas for the week. In the background, video game arguments and shouts of "My turn!" swirl around me. But this girl, *my girl*, offers nothing but relief and inspiration. She used to reside in the cabinet, but now sits forever and always on the counter where she belongs—nestled between Joe, the aloe plant, and a seemingly always half-drunk bottle of red. She's family. She's come along for weekend ski trips, and even a few month-long stays with the in-laws on an island off the coast of Maine (I needed the emotional support). I've hugged her tightly while lumbering toward many a party where she's been my plus-one. I'm at the point where I'm starting to ponder giving her siblings, like a wee one just for dips or a medium-size version for sides or, heavens, *dessert!* I can already picture them, shoulder-to-shoulder, like my own little band of food-splattered kitchen helpers.

My slow cooker isn't just a means to a meal. She's my muse; my savior. My *let-me-take-care-of-everything* life ring. You see, before she came to me one glorious Christmas morning, I was consumed by

kitchen fear. Dinner was a sad merry-go-round of tacos, pasta and baked chicken breasts smothered in some kind of creamy canned soup. I had the utter inability to make a steak that didn't resemble a snow tire—or tell the difference between translucent, perfectly-cooked salmon and the we're-all-getting-salmonella shade. I skipped any recipe that required searing, because: scorching. And barbecuing was out of the question, because, as you know, the grill is the most terrifying appliance there is. (Open flames! Free-flowing flammable gas! Chicken inexplicably transformed into charcoal!)

I also lack whatever genetic allele allows humans to properly time dinner. Invariably I'd wind up throwing apple slices at hungry, impatient children while half the meal kept puttering along and the rest lukewarmed on plates. But then came my dear, dear slow cooker. I quickly learned why she was the star of Pinterest, with billions of recipes all promising ease and flavor and familial bliss. I would simply offer her a hunk of meat, veggies and a smattering of as-instructed spices and—*magic*—dinner was ready on time, every time, making the 6 p.m. version of me infinitely more pleasant. She is the proverbial wind

beneath my chicken wings.

While I adore her unpretentious character (High, Low, Warm—simple, humble qualities) it's also comforting to know that she'll always shoulder 100 percent of the blame when Pinterest lies about how tasty a meal will be. She stoically took it when the family literally ejected dinner into their napkins (the 2017 Fish Stew Fiasco) and when no one wanted seconds—let alone firsts—of those peanut-pasta stuffed peppers. Because, well, *I* didn't do anything wrong. I simply followed the recipe and hit a button.

She's also given me the chutzpah to dip my toes into other, non-slow-cooker cooking realms: frying, sautéing, grilling, *braising* for crying out loud. Still, she will forever remain my favorite **appliance** child. The fact that I Googled *Slow Cooker Braised Bean and Sausage Ragout* right after eating the oven-made version speaks to my unwavering devotion. Surely, she could produce something similar to that heavy, cast-iron pot of deliciousness. Of course she can—she's a Pevzner, dammit! The recipe is on the books for next week. 🍷

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