

I'm often asked how to convert a recipe into a pressure cooker recipe. So the last time I converted a recipe, I wrote down the steps as I was converting it, and today I'm sharing my tips.

Is the recipe a good choice for the pressure cooker?

The first step is picking a recipe that is well suited to the pressure cooker. The pressure cooker requires liquid to achieve pressure. So ideally the recipe will have some liquid in the recipe already. Slow cooker recipes, soups, meats, legume and grain recipes are generally easily adapted to the pressure cooker.

If you want a crispy, fried coating on your meat or veggies, pressure cooking is not the best method. If you're cooking meat that's very lean, or expensive and tender already, the pressure cooker is probably not the best method for cooking that meat.



The pressure cooker excels at taking tough, fatty meats and turning them into tender, succulent meat. It excels at making soups quickly that taste like they've simmered all day long.

It's also perfect for cooking root vegetables. Two of my favorite vegetables to cook in the pressure cooker are potatoes for [potato salad](#) and [spaghetti squash](#). It's the only way I cook rice now, and it makes cooking dry beans a breeze.

How do I know what cook time to use?

The next step is determining cook time. Ideally, you can find a similar recipe online or in a cookbook and use the cook time used in that recipe. Then change the ingredients to use the ingredients from the recipe you're adapting.

If you can't find a similar recipe, then use a reliable chart to find the cook time for the main ingredient in your recipe. I often use the charts in [Pressure Cooker Perfection](#) from America's Test Kitchen, [Vegan Under Pressure](#) by Jill Nussinow, and [Hip Pressure Cooking](#) by Laura Pazzaglia. Hip Pressure Cooking also has helpful [cook time charts online](#).

As a starting point when adapting a recipe, I reduce the cook time of meat recipes cooked in the oven or on the stove by two thirds. For pasta I reduce the cook time by one half.

What if the ingredients have different cook times?

If you're cooking a dish with meat, the size and shape of the meat matters more than the volume of the meat. A big 3 lb. whole roast will take much longer to cook than 3 lbs. of the same roast cut into bite size pieces.

Can you cut the meat so the cook time matches the cook time for other ingredients? For example, small bite size pieces of chicken breast have the same cook time as white rice. So cutting the chicken into bite size pieces lets you cook the chicken and rice at the same time.

If they don't have similar cook times consider cooking the longest ingredient first, then adding the vegetables, such as potatoes and carrots and cook for a few minutes longer.

For example, if you think the meat will take 50 minutes to pressure cook and your vegetables 6 minutes, cook the meat for 50 minutes and release the pressure. Add the veggies, put the lid back on, bring the pot back to pressure and cook for an additional 6 minutes.

You may be able to wrap quick cooking items in tin foil or put a pot on a trivet on top of the longer cooking item to slow down the cooking time.

How much liquid should I use?

Generally 1 cup of liquid. If you're using ingredients that contain lots of water, such as chicken, fruit or vegetables, you may be able to use less liquid.

Since there's very little liquid loss when you pressure cook, you generally have to reduce the liquid in recipes like soups and braises so you don't water down the flavor.



My [Pressure Cooker Thai Chicken Thighs](#) recipe is adapted from a slow cooker recipe from [365 Days of Slow Cooking](#). There's slightly less than 1 cup of liquid in the recipe, but because chicken releases lots of liquid while it cooks, there was no need to change the amount of liquid. However, I was able to reduce the cook time from 6 hours to 9 minutes!

What ingredients shouldn't I use in the pressure cooker?

If there are thickeners, such as corn starch or flour, in the original recipe, make a slurry and add them after pressure cooking. An example of how to make a corn starch slurry is my popular [Beef and Broccoli recipe](#).

Don't flour your meat before browning it. It can create a layer on the bottom of the pressure cooking pot that will prevent it from coming to pressure.

Generally, add dairy products and cheeses after pressure cooking.

Should I do a natural or quick pressure release?

Meat generally benefits from a natural release but if you've got pasta or vegetables in the pot and you're worried about overcooking the ingredients, use a quick pressure release. For more information visit my [Quick Pressure Release or Natural Pressure Cooker Release post](#).

Keep a notebook.

Write down notes so you'll know what changes you made and can tweak the recipe the next time you make it. Or, if you're cooking from a cookbook, I've started writing notes in the margins so I can duplicate what changes I made.

Once you've adapted a couple of recipes, it gets easier. You learn to trust your instincts and use your senses.

If you'd like to print this post to keep in your notebook, I created a [printable pdf version](#).

Now, it's your turn. I'd love to hear your tips and tricks. If you have a tip that helps you convert a recipe, please leave a comment. If I didn't answer your question about converting a recipe, leave me a comment too and I'll do my best to answer it.

Thanks!

If you're new to using the Instant Pot, be sure and check out my posts on [Which Instant Pot Button to Use](#) and [Quick Pressure Release or Natural Pressure Cooker Release](#).

I'm adding a great suggestion by one of my long-time Pressure Cooking Today readers. She suggested new users make several reliable recipes written for the pressure

cooker before trying to adapt their favorites to the pressure cooker. "Better to experience some sure success before riding the bike without training wheels, so to speak."