

Crockpot and Stovetop 101

In this section, I'm combining the Crockpot, aka the Slow Cooker, as well as Stovetop cooking. There isn't really enough on each topic to warrant its own section in the resource, but there are a few things in each that I want to touch on- mainly some of my most important pointers about crockpot cooking, and a breakdown of stovetop pan types.

Crockpot/Slow Cookers

I'll begin with crockpots/slow cookers. Most of us are pretty familiar with these devices, but if you're not, here's how they work:

The crockpot is comprised of two layers, an inner pot, and the outer pot. The inner pot is something that conducts *and* holds heat really well, like stone or ceramic. The outer pot heats the inner pot to keep low, slow, even heat distributed around the inner pot for the entire duration of the cooking process. Keeping a tight lid on is essential because you're trapping that heat inside. This type of low, slow heat helps break down tough ingredients like sinewy meat or starchy and or cruciferous vegetables, which results in really sumptuous flavors and textures.

Most crockpots start at about \$20 for an average size, which is about 6 quarts., They go all the way up to 10 quarts, and you can buy double or triple potted crockpots that have separate heating elements, which work great for things like parties or feeding large groups of people.

I got my family crockpot on Amazon about 8 or 9 years ago for \$20, and it's still trucking along. The brand I purchased was the Crockpot brand, which is the original slow cooker and honestly, it's the brand I trust the most- although I think it really depends on your type of brand loyalty, and what you're used to. Black and Decker make a fabulous crockpot, as does Hamilton Beach.

Stovetop Meals

The other type of one-pot cooking I want to discuss today is stovetop meals. Thing encompasses anything cooked on- obvi! - a stovetop burner. Think stir-fries, soups, pasta, etc.

Stovetop cooking really comes down especially to know the right type of pan for the recipe you're cooking. Wide and flat? Stainless steel or nonstick? Cast-iron? Wok? Pot? There seems to be a million different types of pans, and they all have different outcomes when it comes to the recipe you're making.

If it helps, here's a quick outline on each of the main types of pans and pots on the market today:

Stainless steel: I love this type of pan, and recommend it to everyone. My favorite is my wide saute pan with a helper handle as well as a long handle, and I use mine all the time. It conducts heat well and washed clean, especially with steel wool and elbow grease.

Cast iron: I love these in all shapes and sizes. The two size pans I use most often is my grill pan and my 6" flat cast iron, although a lot of people swear by their cast-iron griddles for things like pancakes. Make sure that once your pan is seasoned, you don't clean with soap (and use an approved scrubber to get the grit off- I linked to one in the Amazon shop) and towel dry, don't air dry- this will help prevent rusting.

Nonstick (Teflon and other): These definitely have their place, although don't write off the nonstick of a good cast iron pan. In the last few years, I've been moving away from nonstick as I find they don't last as long and I'm worried about toxins that leach into our foods. Make sure you don't use metal utensils with these, such tongs or metal spoons, and stick to plastic, silicone, or wood.

Ceramic pans: Similar to nonstick, ceramic pans have been treated with a glaze to stay nonstick. They conduct heat well and are generally pretty affordable. Most companies do recommend lining pads between the pans when you stack them in the cupboard, to protect the glaze.

Aluminum pans: I recommend aluminum with reservations; when used in a pan as the cooking surface, aluminum is typically uneven in cooking and leaches heavy metals into foods- so stay away wif you're trying to have fewer toxins in your life. However, this isn't so if the aluminum is a core, sandwiched between other layers of metal. In fact, it's hard to get away from as adonized aluminum is an extremely popular core in many brands.

Cooper pans: Conduct heat beautifully and, bonus, are gorgeous to look at.

You can find the specific brand recommendations in the [Percolate Kitchen Amazon Shop](#) as well!

A quick word on Induction vs Gas & Electric Stovetops:

Gas and coiled stovetops heat pots and pans through contact. Thermal conduction is the energy created via heating elements that in turn heats the pans and your food, via direct contact. Your pots and pans are sitting on more or less direct heat.

But with an induction stovetop, meaning, one of those flat top stovetops, the heat comes via coils underneath the surface and is then transferred via an oscillating magnetic field. Because magnetism is the way the heat is transferred, your pots and pans **MUST** have a magnetic element to them in order to conduct that heat. Metals that don't attract magnets, such as aluminum, nickel, glass, and copper. If you want to know if your pan will work on an induction stove, stick a fridge magnet on it. If the magnet sticks- congrats, it'll work on induction.

Which is better?

Personally, I prefer gas, since you can control that heat so much better. Most recipes are written for use with gas stoves, so if you're having trouble with a recipe and you're working with an electric stove, that may be why. Plus, electric stovetops tend to heat slowly and don't give off even heat for the most part, which can be tricky when you're following new recipes. But, if you've got an induction or electric stove at home, don't worry! It just takes a little more finesse and understanding the workings of your stove and before you know it, it becomes second nature.

That's it for the crockpot and stovetop section! I hope this helps- and if you have any other questions about these types of cooking, feel free to reach out in email ruthy@percolatekitchen.com, or in the dms on Instagram [@percolatekitchen](https://www.instagram.com/percolatekitchen)