

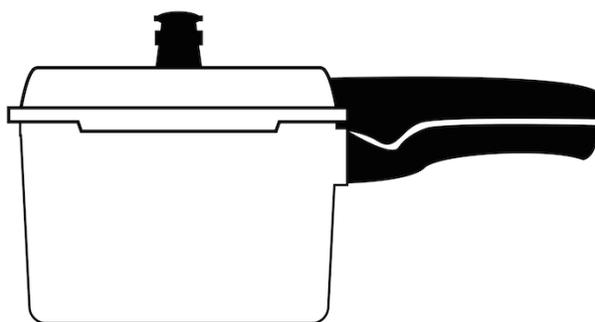
# Introduction to Pressure Cookers

## Meet the Pressure Cooker:

A pressure cooker is another piece of kitchen equipment that is used for moist heat cooking. By heating foods inside a pressure cooker instead of a saucepan or Dutch oven, you can cook them 3 to 10 times faster than you otherwise could. Pressure cooking has been around for decades and was a favorite for quick meals in the days before the microwave. Now, with the widespread popularity of the microwave and an unnecessary fear of cooking with pressure, many pressure cookers have been pushed to the back of the cupboard or donated to thrift stores.

A cooking liquid is an essential ingredient in pressure cooking. When trapped inside the pressure cooker, this liquid turns into steam. The super-heated steam is hotter than normal boiling or cooking temperatures, so the food cooks faster. Whole potatoes or brown rice can be cooked in ten minutes, beef fajitas in five minutes, and fish with broccoli is done in just two minutes. For many jobs, the pressure cooker is faster than the microwave and produces better results.

Foods cooked in a pressure cooker will retain color, flavor, and vitamins because of the small amount of liquid used and the quick cooking time. No salt nor additional fats or oils are needed.



Pressure Cooker

Pressure cooking is great for less tender and less fatty “budget” cuts of meat that usually require long and slow cooking times.

If you’re a little apprehensive about using a pressure cooker, be assured that they are safe if used correctly. After you understand how the safety features work and have used it once or twice, it will feel as easy as the microwave. Read the instruction book that comes with the cooker before attempting to use it. The rack in the bottom of the cooker is a key part – the liquid stays under the rack and helps to keep the flavors separate, so you can cook things like cabbage, onions, and Brussels sprouts with other foods without everything tasting the same. If you want more intermingled flavors, just leave the rack out.

## What Should I Make in a Pressure Cooker?

Any foods that can be cooked at the same pressure for the same length of time can be cooked together in the pressure cooker. You can even do a meal in one pot – it saves time and cleanup too.

Some slow-cooking foods like split peas, dried beans, lentils, grains, and rice can be done quickly in the pressure cooker. With these foods, make sure the cooker is only filled halfway and no more. You need to take special care with these foods, making sure that the vent is not clogged during cooking.

Always use a liquid when pressure cooking (at least 1/2 cup) – that’s where you get the steam. It is possible, though difficult, to burn food in a pressure cooker, so keep an eye on it as it cooks.