

The INSTANT POT: Getting Started



perfect for beginners

By Karen Petersen or 365 Days of Slow Cooking + Pressure Cooking (365daysofcrockpot.com)

Congratulations on getting your first Instant Pot! It is an amazing appliance that I'm sure you will absolutely love. For some people, it can seem a little overwhelming to get started. Don't be intimidated! I'm going to walk you through the steps of how to get started using your electric pressure cooker.

Step 1: Take it out of the box

Step 2: Remove the packaging. There is a plastic film that is invisible that covers the display. You can easily peel it off.

Step 3: Read the manual, or at least look over it. It's not very long (lots of it is in other languages so it seems longer than it is).

Step 4: Plug your Instant Pot in and do the water test. The water test is just to make sure that your pot is working properly and can reach pressure. Here's how you do it:

1. Pour 3 cups of water in the Instant Pot inner pot.
2. Cover the pot and secure the lid. Make sure the valve is pointing to "sealing," not "venting."
3. Set the STEAM button to 2 minutes (use the + and – buttons to adjust the time). The pot will take about 10 minutes to come to pressure and then it will start counting down the 2 minutes.
4. Once the pot beeps after the 2 minutes is up move the valve to "venting." Once all the steam is released remove the lid. You are now ready to start using your Instant Pot. If anything seems to go wrong or if you are in doubt refer to this troubleshooting guide (<https://instantpot.com/troubleshooting/>). You can also call customer service at 1-800-828-7280, extension 2.

Now you can start cooking!

Vocab Lesson

But first here is a quick vocabulary lesson! When you read a recipe a lot of times they will use the terms "natural pressure release" and "quick release." Here's what it means...

A **quick pressure release** is when you open the valve and allow the steam to release quickly. If you're using an Instant Pot, you turn the valve from sealing to venting to release the pressure.

When the pressure is fully released, the float valve (the little silver piece next to the venting valve) will drop and the lid will unlock to open. The pressure cooker will not open until the pressure is released and the float valve has dropped.

Keep your face and hands away from the steam as it's released. Don't release pressure under hanging cabinets, which can be damaged by the steam. Don't use a quick release with ingredients that foam, have fatty or thick ingredients.

A **natural pressure release** is when the cooking time is over and you leave the valve closed and allow the pressure to decrease without doing anything.

Following pressure cooking, electric pressure cookers automatically switch to the Keep Warm setting. As soon as it switches to the Keep Warm Setting the pressure begins to drop. The time it takes for the pressure to release will vary depending on the ingredients and amount of liquid in the pressure cooker.

A natural pressure release can take from 5 to 30 minutes in the electric pressure cooker. When the pressure is fully released, the float valve will drop and the lid will unlock and open. There is no beep or signal when the pressure is released. Sometimes you can hear the float valve drop if you're close by.

Here are some tips that will be helpful to you as you get started....

5 Things NOT to do:

- **Don't store your Instant Pot with the lid on top.** The sealing ring of your Instant Pot can get pretty smelly. If you store your pot with the lid on top securely in place the sealing ring won't get to air out. I always store my Instant Pot with the lid on top but upside down. That way the sealing ring will get to air out and it becomes less smelly. Some other ways to get that sealing ring to not stink are to air it out in the sunshine, put it in a ziplock bag with baking soda or clean it with white vinegar or lemon. I have two sealing rings (I bought them on Amazon). One for savory dishes and one for sweet dishes or for making yogurt.
- **Don't add dairy until the food is done pressure cooking.** Just like slow cooking you can't add dairy to the Instant Pot until the food is done cooking. If you do it will curdle. Sour cream, cream cheese, milk and even coconut milk or evaporated milk will all curdle and separate.
- **Don't act like you know what you're doing and don't give up.** Although I'm a good stovetop cook, who likes to "wing it" when cooking, I find that pressure cooking is a whole different thing. Entirely. I met constant failures and frustrations, until I realized I needed to pretend like I knew nothing about cooking, and go into it with that mindset, so I could learn afresh. I followed recipes, from trusted resources, because winging it didn't work until I knew this new method of cooking. Once I came into it with that mindset, it all became a LOT easier. Once you get a handle on the "rules" of pressure cooking you can experiment a bit. But until then, follow recipes and don't give up if you have a recipe fail every now and then!
- **Don't get frustrated by how long it takes.** Just because a recipe has a pressure cook time of 2 minutes doesn't mean that the food will actually be done in 2 minutes. There is a good 10 minutes of heating up the pot and letting the pressure build and then the recipe might also call for a "natural pressure release" which will take another 10 minutes or so.

Don't get irritated by this! Use your time wisely by doing all the dishes and cleaning up the kitchen in the meantime. I like to prepare a salad or fresh veggies during this time as well. I have gotten a lot of laundry folded and put away in the time the pressure is releasing. Make it a game to see how much you can get done while your Instant Pot is cooking your food! Remember it's all hands-off cooking time which is such a blessing when you have a busy family that needs your attention on something other than stirring the risotto.

- **Don't quick release meats.** If you're making a pot roast or pulled pork don't use a quick release (QR)! A quick pressure release is when you open the valve and allow the steam to release quickly. If you're using an Instant Pot, you turn the valve from sealing to venting to release the pressure. This quick release dries out the meat and it won't be as tender. When possible use a natural pressure release (NPR) when cooking meats. A natural pressure release is when the cooking time is over and you leave the valve closed and allow the pressure to decrease without doing anything. Your Instant Pot will automatically switch to the Keep Warm setting. As soon as it switches to Keep Warm the pressure will begin to drop. The time it will take to release all the pressure depends on the ingredients and the amount of liquid in the pressure cooker. Unfortunately, there is no beep or signal when the pressure is released. The float valve will simply drop down and you'll be able to open the lid. Sometimes you can hear the float valve drop if you're close by.
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Now that you have the basics under your belt let's get started cooking!

I suggest starting with hard boiled eggs. When cooked in the Instant Pot they peel soooo easily. Here's how I make hard boiled eggs:

instant pot hard boiled eggs recipe

Easy to peel hard boiled eggs without the gray ring around the yolk, made in your pressure cooker.

INGREDIENTS

- Eggs
- 1 cup water

INSTRUCTIONS

Place a steamer basket (<https://amzn.to/2pTfWa7>) or stainless steel trivet (this should have come with your Instant Pot) in the bottom of the Instant Pot. Add 1 cup of water into the bottom of the pot.

Add in as many eggs as you'd like (don't fill higher than halfway full).

Secure the lid and turn the sealing vent to "sealing".

Press the manual button/pressure cook button and adjust the time to 2 minutes (on high pressure).

Once the timer beeps let it sit for 10-15 minutes and then turn the valve from “sealing” to “venting.” (Display will say L0:10. The L stands for lapsed time.)

Remove the lid and use tongs to place the eggs in a strainer and then run cold water over them. After that feel free to eat them or just store in the fridge until you’re ready to use them.

After you’ve mastered hard boiled eggs try making rice. I love using my Instant Pot to make brown rice. I can never get it quite right on the stove but every time I make it in my Instant Pot it turns out perfectly! Here’s how I make it:

instant pot brown rice recipe

Perfectly cooked brown rice without any fuss made in your pressure cooker in 40 minutes.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups brown rice
- 2 1/2 cups water
- Pinch of salt

INSTRUCTIONS

Add the water and the brown rice and a pinch of salt (if desired) into the Instant Pot.

Place the lid on the pressure cooker and turn the valve to sealing. Turn the saute function off and turn to manual for 22 minutes.

When the beeper goes off, keep the lid on for an additional 10 minutes and then turn the valve to venting.

Remove the lid and the rice should be ready to eat and enjoy!

I make shredded chicken all the time in the Instant Pot. My favorite thing about the Instant Pot is that you can cook meats from frozen! This seasoned, shredded chicken is so tasty you can eat it plain or you can use it in recipes that call for cooked chicken.

instant pot seasoned shredded chicken

If you love rotisserie-style chicken you need to make this chicken! It’s super tender and moist. My husband said to me, “I think this is the best chicken you’ve ever made.”

INGREDIENTS

- 4-5 lbs of boneless, skinless chicken thighs and breasts (you can use all thighs or you can use a mix of thighs and breasts)
- 1 cup water

- 1 1/2 tsp chicken bouillon granules
- 1 Tbsp garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp onion powder
- 1 Tbsp seasoned salt
- 1 1/2 tsp oregano
- 1 1/2 tsp black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

Put chicken in the Instant Pot. My chicken was 3 totally frozen blocks of chicken. Add in the water, bouillon, garlic powder, onion powder, seasoned salt, oregano and pepper.

Secure the lid and turn the sealing vent to “sealed”.

Press the manual/pressure cook button and adjust the time to 20 minutes (if frozen in individual breasts/thighs)/ 18 minutes if not frozen.

Once the timer beeps let it sit for 5 minutes and then turn the valve from “sealing” to “quick pressure release.” Remove the lid and then remove the chicken and place on a cutting board. Shred or cut the chicken.

Eat as is or use in recipes that call for cooked chicken. Store leftover chicken in an airtight container in the refrigerator or in the freezer.

You can make fall apart tender roast in the Instant Pot. Here is my easiest recipe for roast. It calls for a rump roast but you can also use a chuck roast.

instant pot 3-ingredient rump roast

An easy beginner recipe for the Instant Pot. Beef pot roast is cooked until tender in the electric pressure cooker. If desired you can also make carrots and potatoes with the roast.

INGREDIENTS

- 2-3 pounds rump roast, trimmed of excess fat
- 2 cups water
- 1 packet onion soup mix
- 1 (1 oz) au jus gravy mix packet
- Optional: 1 pound baby carrots
- Optional: 1 pound Russet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks (or yellow potatoes, skin on)
- Cornstarch

INSTRUCTIONS

Place your trimmed roast in your Instant Pot. Pour in the water. Sprinkle the packet of onion soup mix over the roast. Sprinkle your packet of au jus gravy mix on top of the roast.

Cover the pot and secure the lid. Make sure valve is set to sealing. Set the manual/pressure cook button to 90 minutes on high pressure. The pot will take about 10 minutes to build pressure and then will start counting down from 90.

No potatoes and carrots option: Once the time is up let the pot sit there for another 15 minutes (display will read L0:15) and then move the valve to venting. Remove the lid.

Potatoes and carrots option: Once the time is up move the valve to venting. Remove the lid. Add in the potatoes and carrots. Replace the lid and set the valve to sealing. Set the manual/pressure cook button to 4 minutes (for less soft vegetables) or 5 minutes (or softer vegetables). When the time is up let the pot sit there for 10-15 minutes (L0:10) and then move the valve to venting.

To make the gravy: Place the meat and vegetables on a platter and set aside. Turn the Instant Pot to the saute setting. Make a cornstarch slurry in a small bowl. Stir together 2 Tbsp of cornstarch and 2 Tbsp of cold water until smooth. Stir the slurry into the pot. Whisk. It should thicken the gravy very quickly.

Serve the gravy with the roast and optional vegetables.

NOTES

What if my roast is frozen? You can still make this recipe! Just add 20 extra minutes, so 110 minutes instead of 90 minutes.

Whenever someone asks me for a bbq pulled pork recipe I give them this one. I add bbq sauce at the end. I buy the meat at Winco called "carnitas meat" and it works perfectly.

instant pot pulled pork

If you love pulled pork and you love a smoked flavor on your meat but you don't have hours to spend you're going to love this easy pressure cooker smoky shredded pork.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 1/2 lbs pork carnitas meat, shoulder or butt roast
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce (I used low sodium soy sauce)
- 2 Tbsp liquid smoke
- 2 garlic cloves, minced

INSTRUCTIONS

Quarter the pork and then place pork in bottom of Instant Pot. Pour all the other ingredients over the top of the pork.

Cover and make sure valve is on “sealing.” Set the manual button for 70 minutes. When the time is up let the pressure release naturally for 15 minutes. Release any extra pressure by gently pushing the valve to “venting.”

Transfer the meat to a cutting board and shred with a fork. It should be ultra tender.

Serve meat plain, on sandwiches, in a salad, in a taco or however you want! If you want to add bbq sauce to make it more flavorful you can do that too.

I have a million soup recipes on my website but I chose to include this one here because it is seriously so fast and easy. We love this one at our house.

instant pot creamy chicken tortilla soup

An easy dump and go soup recipe that you can make in minutes in your electric pressure cooker.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts or chicken thighs (can be frozen)
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup picante sauce
- 1 (14.5) oz can petite diced tomatoes with juice
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 (13.75 oz) can cream of chicken soup (I use Campbell's)
- 1 cup frozen corn or drained canned corn
- 1 (14 oz) can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional toppings: grated cheddar, sour cream, cilantro, avocado and tortilla chips

INSTRUCTIONS

Add chicken to the Instant Pot. Pour in the chicken broth. Dump the picante sauce, tomatoes, garlic powder, cumin, cream of chicken soup, corn and beans on top of the chicken. Don't stir.

Cover the Instant Pot and secure the lid. Make sure the valve is set to sealing. Set the manual/pressure cook button to 10 minutes for thawed chicken or 12 minutes for frozen chicken. Alternately you can add in cooked chicken (like this chicken or rotisserie chicken) and you'll only need to set the time to 5 minutes of pressure cook time.

Let the pressure release naturally for 5 minutes and then move the valve to venting. Remove the lid and stir the soup. Remove the chicken and shred or cut into bite size pieces and then stir the chicken back into the pot. Add in the red bell pepper. Salt and pepper the soup to taste.

Ladle the soup into bowls and top with your desired toppings.

NOTES

Remember that it will take the pot 10-15 minutes to come to pressure. If the chicken is frozen the pot will take longer to come to pressure. You can speed up the process by turning on the saute function while adding in the ingredients and add in boiling chicken broth.

If you don't like using cream of chicken soup you can leave it out. Add in a cup of heavy cream after the soup has cooked.

Good luck with your new appliance! Come to 365daysofcrockpot.com for more Instant Pot recipes, tips and tricks. If you're a visual learner find me on YouTube.