



## **Instant Pot Cooking Basics**

Andrea Pracht

### Buying a Pressure Cooker

**SIZE.** I recommend either 6 or 8 quart sizes, depending on the size of your family and your storage space (the 8 quart electrics get pretty large).

**BRAND & MODEL** Regarding brands, most people immediately go to the Instant Pot brand. There are several Instant Pot models available, but the Duo or Duo Plus is the most popular and is highly recommended by many Instant Pot users. For more Instant Pot guidance, here is a link to a summary of Hip Pressure Cooking's [summary of their models](#). For reference, in our course, I showed an 8 quart LUX, a 6 quart DUO, and a 6 qt ULTRA.

There are other electric pressure cooker brands out there. If you find one of these that works for you, remember that recipes written for the Instant Pot will work in your cooker.

### Using your Pressure Cooker

Now that you've seen some modern pressure cookers in action, I recommend playing with your cooker and getting comfortable with it in your home. If you would like more hands on help with your pressure cooker, I also offer virtual cook along classes - contact me if you'd like more info.

Following is a summary of some helpful tips:

- Start by bringing 2 cups of water to pressure in your cooker. Keep it at high pressure for 10 minutes. Once the pressure is lowered, measure the amount of water remaining. This will help you know how much liquid your cooker loses over time.
- Always have at least 1 cup of liquid in your cooker.
- Never fill your cooker over 2/3 full or 1/2 full if you are cooking grains or beans.
- To bring the cooker to pressure, add ingredients (don't forget liquid), lock the lid, press start if it is electric or bring heat to high if it is a stovetop cooker. For stovetop cookers, once the pressure indicator rises, turn the heat down to low and start the timer.
- Store your pressure cooker with the lid off. If you leave the lid tight on the pan, you run the risk of shortening the life of the seal.

- Clean your pressure cooker by taking the seal out and cleaning the pressure regulator valve. The best way to clean the valve is to run a pipe cleaner or small brush or wire through the air vent.
- Don't get oversold on speciality pressure cooker tools. You can use silicon, glass, and bakeware in your pressure cooker. You don't need a special cake pan or trivet just for the pressure cooker. Anything that can go in your oven can basically be used in your pressure cooker (as long as it fits!).
- If you double a recipe (or cook 12 eggs instead of 1), your recipe time does not necessarily change. Just be sure not to overload the pressure cooker (1/2 to 2/3 full depending on ingredient).
- Recipes should call for either a slow release or a quick release. Slow release means allowing the pressure cooker to release pressure on its own for at least 10 minutes after the cooking has stopped. Quick release means using the pressure release valve to release pressure manually after cooking has stopped.
- Never cover the pressure release valve with a towel. If the steam bothers you, place the pressure cooker under a stove vent to capture the release steam.
- Electric pressure cookers usually go to a "keep warm" setting after cooking time has stopped. This can cause the electric pressure cookers to hold pressure for quite a long time. You may turn off the pressure cooker after cooking to help the pressure lower more quickly.
- You can carefully use a cold washcloth or towel on the top or sides of an electric pressure cooker to help release the pressure more quickly, if you don't want to manually release the pressure. Just be careful not to block the pressure release valve.
- No matter what the owner's manual says, do not use an electric pressure cooker for pressure canning. This method of pressure canning has not been studied or approved by the USDA.

### Finding Good Recipes

Once you learn the basics of using your pressure cooker, the next thing is to find good recipes. Be aware that many recipes that you'll find may be dated or have inaccurate cooking times - use trustworthy recipe sources as you start out and learn accurate cooking times.

- There are many ways to convert your favorite recipes to the pressure cooker. Here is one [recipe converter](#) at Hip Pressure Cooking that I like. I will also help, if you'd like.
- There are lots of facebook user pages that are helpful. These are a couple that I follow:
  - [Instant Pot Community](#)
  - [Pressure Cooking and More with Fagor](#)

- *The Instant Pot Bible* by Bruce Weinstein & Mark Scarbrough  
Of all of my pressure cooking cook books, this has become my go-to cookbook. My favorite feature is that the authors include “road-map” recipes for foods such as chili, bean soup, creamy vegetable soup, and pot roast, to name a few. This allows the cook to adjust recipes to their tastes, which is an important feature when you are new to pressure cooking recipes. There are not a lot of photos and they do not have very basic recipes for things such as plain rice or oatmeal, but the recipes are varied and include ideas for weeknight meals (mac and cheese) and fancier weekend types of meals (such as pork belly braised in ginger beer). There are also meals that are kid friendly (meatloaf) and adult friendly (spicy curried butternut squash soup).
- *Hip Pressure Cooking* by Laura D. A. Pazzaglia  
[www.hippressurecooking.com](http://www.hippressurecooking.com)  
My comments – This book includes lots of ethnic flavors and its best feature is the great timing tables. It covers a lot of pressure cooking basics and has good recipes. Some of the basic “American style” things that you might want to do with a pressure cooker, like baked beans or a simple pot roast are not in this book. This book has timing for both electric and stovetop cookers.
- [www.mykitchenclatter.com](http://www.mykitchenclatter.com)  
I should probably also mention my own website; however, I will be the first to admit that I don’t post enough recipes or have good photos. I do post my favorite recipes and if you have a request for something that you don’t see, please contact me. I love to put things out there that I know people are looking for!

### Ideas for Getting Started with Pressure Cooking

Here are some of my favorite things to cook in the pressure cooker along with some quick tips. I recommend the people start by finding some of their current favorite recipes or foods and cook those using the pressure cooker. So, if you make a lot of rice, then try making rice in the pressure cooker. This will be the easiest way to make the pressure cooker work into your lifestyle.

#### Rice

Expert Tip - put your rice in a Pyrex bowl with water - 1 cup of rice to 1.25 cups of water. Add one cup of water in the bottom of your pressure cooker. Place rice bowl on a trivet and cook on high pressure for 7 minutes for white rice. Allow to release using slow release (or 10 minutes). Perfect rice - and a clean pressure cooker!

#### Beans, from dried beans

Expert Tip - soak a bunch of dried beans at a time and freeze them soaked, before cooking. When your recipe calls for soaked beans, you will have them already at hand. Soaked beans (frozen or thawed) can be added to any pressure cooking recipe that calls for canned or soaked beans - just be sure that the recipe has enough cooking time for the soaked beans (usually 6-12 minutes, depending on the size of the beans).

#### Pulled Pork or Chicken

Expert Tip - make a bunch of pork or chicken at once. Use some for a meal and leftovers and freeze the rest for future meals. A good stand mixer with wire whisks can make shredding the meat a breeze - check out this [YouTube video](#) from Noreen's Kitchen for a visual.

#### Cheesecake

Expert Tip - Cheesecakes in the pressure cooker will never have a crack on the top and they have the perfect texture. If you like to make cheesecakes, check out [This Old Gal](#) for lots of tips. Her site has a lot going on, but she does have useful advice.

#### Hard or Soft Boiled Eggs

Expert Tip - Eggs cooked in the pressure cooker will be easy to peel. Even fresh eggs. For consistent results, keep your conditions the same: cold eggs, 1 cup of cold water, extra large eggs. Many people who use an electric cooker do a 6:6:6 method - 6 minutes cook, 6 minutes slow release, 6 minutes in a cold water bath. Play with this a few times till you find the perfect conditions for your cooker and kitchen.

#### Steel Cut Oatmeal

Expert Tip - The pressure cooker saves a little time, but the main advantage is no stirring. Use 1 cup of steel cut oats to 2 and 3/4 cups of water and cook for 5 minutes. If you'd like, add a stick of cinnamon, a banana, a chopped apple, or raisins and you are good to go! Allow for natural release of at least 10 minutes. I do mine on a delay setting in the electric pressure cooker - I set it the night before to be ready in the morning.

#### For More Information

I hope you got enough information out of this class to be confident with your pressure cooking at home, but if you feel you need more hands on instruction, please contact me. I also do virtual cook and bake-along classes on pressure cooking and other homemade foods.