

Serves 8

Vegan Friendly

Can Be Halved

Tips

Toasting fennel seeds intensifies their flavor. To toast fennel seeds: Stir seeds in a dry skillet over medium heat until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Immediately transfer to a mortar or spice grinder and grind finely.

To prepare bulb fennel: Before removing the core, chop off the top shoots (which resemble celery) and discard. If desired, save the feathery green fronds to use as a garnish. If the outer sections of the bulb seem old and dry, peel them with a vegetable peeler before using.

Whether you use salt, and the quantity you use, will depend on the sodium content of your broth. Prepared versions are generally much higher in sodium than those that are homemade.

For a slightly different tomato flavor, substitute 2 cans (each 14 oz/398 mL) fire-roasted tomatoes with juice for the crushed tomatoes.

If you are halving this recipe, be sure to use a small (approx. 2 quart) slow cooker.

Make Ahead

Complete Steps 1 and 2. Cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days. When you're ready to cook, complete the recipe.

Fennel-Scented Tomato and Wild Rice Soup

If, like me, you get cravings for tomatoes, this soup is for you. Made with fire-roasted tomatoes (see Tips, left), it provides a real tomato hit. The fennel brings intriguing licorice flavor, and the wild rice adds texture to make this soup particularly enjoyable.

• Medium to large (3½ to 5 quart) slow cooker

1 tbsp	oil	15 mL
2	leeks, white part with just a bit of green, cleaned and sliced (see Tips, page 94)	2
1	bulb fennel, cored and thinly sliced on the vertical	1
3	cloves garlic, sliced	3
1 tsp	fennel seeds, toasted and ground (see Tips, left)	5 mL
½ tsp	salt, optional	2 mL
½ tsp	freshly ground black pepper	2 mL
1	can (28 oz/796 mL) crushed tomatoes	1
4 cups	vegetable broth, divided	1 L
¾ cup	wild rice, rinsed and drained	175 mL
	Heavy or whipping (35%) cream or non-dairy alternative, optional	
	Finely chopped fennel fronds or Italian flat-leaf parsley	

1. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add leeks and fennel bulb and cook, stirring, until softened, about 7 minutes. Add garlic, fennel seeds, salt, if using, and pepper and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Stir in tomatoes and 2 cups (500 mL) of the broth. Remove from heat.
2. Purée using an immersion blender. (You can also do this in batches in a food processor or stand blender.) Transfer to slow cooker stoneware.
3. Add remaining 2 cups (500 mL) of broth and wild rice. Cover and cook on Low for 6 hours or on High for 3 hours, until rice is tender and grains have begun to split. Ladle into bowls, drizzle with cream, if using, and garnish with fennel fronds.



Serves 4

Can Be Halved

Tips

For the best flavor, toast cumin and coriander seeds and grind them yourself. *To toast seeds:* Place in a dry skillet over medium heat and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Immediately transfer to a spice grinder or mortar and grind finely.

A grapefruit spoon does a great job of cleaning the pith and seeds from the chile pepper.

If you are halving this recipe, be sure to use a small (1½ to 3½ quart) slow cooker.

Variations

Vegetable Biryani with Crispy Shallot or Onion Topping: Make Crispy Shallot Topping (page 153) or Crispy Onion Topping (Variation, page 132). When serving, ladle biriyani onto plates and garnish liberally with topping.

Vegetable Biryani

Here's a tasty and nutritious main course that is very easy to make. If you have time, make the *Crispy Shallot or Onion Topping* (see *Variations, left*). It adds delicious flavor and texture to the end result.

- **Medium to large (3½ to 5 quart) slow cooker**
- **Lightly greased slow cooker stoneware**

3 tbsp	oil, divided	45 mL
1 tsp	cumin seeds	5 mL
½ tsp	ground turmeric	2 mL
2 cups	cubed (½ inch/1 cm) peeled potatoes	500 mL
1	red or sweet onion, thinly sliced on the vertical	1
2	carrots, peeled and diced	2
2 cups	diced fennel bulb	500 mL
1½ cups	long-grain brown rice, rinsed and drained	375 mL
2 tsp	ground cumin	10 mL
1 tsp	ground coriander	5 mL
1 tsp	salt	5 mL
1 tsp	cracked black peppercorns	5 mL
2	green cardamom pods, crushed	2
4 cups	vegetable broth	1 L

1. In a skillet, heat 2 tbsp (25 mL) of the oil over medium-high heat. Add cumin seeds and cook until they sizzle, about 10 seconds. Stir in turmeric. Add potatoes and cook, stirring, until they begin to brown, about 3 minutes. Add red onion and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add carrots and fennel and cook, stirring, until well coated with mixture. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.
2. Add remaining tbsp (15 mL) of oil, rice, ground cumin and coriander, salt, peppercorns and cardamom pods to pan and cook, stirring, until well coated. Add vegetable broth and bring to a boil. Boil for 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, layer half the rice mixture over bottom of prepared slow cooker. Spread vegetables over it. Add remaining rice mixture plus all of the liquid. Place a clean tea towel, folded in half (so you will have two layers), over top of stoneware to absorb moisture. Cover and cook on Low for 6 hours or on High for 3 hours, until rice is tender and liquid has been absorbed. Serve hot.



Serves 4

Vegan Friendly

Entertaining Worthy

Can Be Halved

Tips

For the best flavor, toast cumin seeds and grind them yourself. *To toast seeds:* Place in a dry skillet over medium heat and cook, stirring, until fragrant about 3 minutes.

Immediately transfer to a spice grinder or mortar and grind finely.

For this quantity of beans, use 1 can (14 to 19 oz/398 to 540 mL) drained and rinsed, or cook 1 cup (250 mL) dried beans (see Basic Beans, page 239).

If you are halving this recipe, be sure to use a small (1½ to 3½ quart) slow cooker.

Make Ahead

Complete Steps 1 and 3. Cover and refrigerate tomato and chile mixtures separately for up to 2 days, being aware that the chile mixture will lose some of its vibrancy if held for this long. (For best results, rehydrate the chiles while the dish is cooking or no sooner than the night before you plan to cook.) When you're ready to cook, complete the recipe.

Easy Vegetable Chili

Not only is this chili easy to make, it is also delicious. The mild dried chiles add interesting flavor, along with a nice bit of heat. Only add the jalapeño if you're a heat seeker.

• Medium to large (3½ to 5 quart) slow cooker

1 tbsp	oil	15 mL
2	onions, chopped	2
4	stalks celery, thinly sliced	4
4	cloves garlic, minced	4
2 tsp	ground cumin (see Tips, page 199)	10 mL
2 tsp	dried oregano, crumbled	10 mL
1 tsp	salt	5 mL
1	can (14 oz/398 mL) diced tomatoes with juice	1
2 cups	cooked dried or canned red kidney beans, drained and rinsed (see Basic Beans, page 239)	500 mL
2	dried New Mexico, ancho or guajillo chile peppers	2
2 cups	boiling water	500 mL
1 cup	coarsely chopped cilantro, leaves and stems	250 mL
1 cup	vegetable broth, tomato juice or water	250 mL
1	jalapeño pepper, coarsely chopped, optional	1
2 cups	corn kernels	500 mL
1	green bell pepper, chopped	1

1. In a skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onions and celery and cook, stirring, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add garlic, cumin, oregano and salt and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add tomatoes with juice and bring to a boil. Transfer to slow cooker stoneware.
2. Add beans and stir well. Cover and cook on Low for 6 hours or on High for 3 hours, until hot and bubbly.
3. About an hour before the recipe is finished cooking, in a heatproof bowl, soak dried chiles in boiling water for 30 minutes, weighing down with a cup to ensure they remain submerged. Drain and discard soaking liquid. Discard stems and chop peppers coarsely. Transfer to a blender. Add cilantro, broth, and jalapeño, if using. Purée.
4. Add chile mixture to stoneware and stir well. Add corn and bell pepper and stir well. Cover and cook on High for 20 minutes, until pepper is tender and mixture is hot and bubbly.



Serves 8 to 12

Entertaining Worthy

Tip

An English pudding basin is actually a simple rimmed bowl, most often white, that comes in various sizes. The rim is an asset as it enables you to make a seal with foil, which can be well secured with string or an elastic or silicone band. A small ovenproof mixing bowl can be substituted.

Plum Pudding

Here's a lightened-up version of a traditional holiday favorite. Allow a week for the mixed pudding to soak in the refrigerator. I like to serve this warm, with a simple lemon sauce or store-bought lemon curd, but if you're a traditionalist, hard sauce works well, too. Don't worry about leftovers. It reheats well and, with a steaming cup of tea makes a great snack, taking the chill off even the most blustery winter day.

- **Large (minimum 5 quart) oval slow cooker**
- **6-cup (1.5 L) pudding basin (see Tip, left), baking dish or soufflé dish, lightly greased**

1 cup	seedless raisins	250 mL
½ cup	finely chopped mixed candied fruit	125 mL
2 tbsp	chopped candied orange peel	25 mL
2 tbsp	chopped candied ginger	25 mL
	Finely grated zest of 1 orange	
	Finely grated zest of 1 lemon	
½ cup	brandy or dark rum (approx.)	125 mL
¾ cup	all-purpose flour	175 mL
¾ cup	fine dry white bread crumbs	175 mL
2 tbsp	ground toasted blanched almonds	25 mL
1 tsp	ground cinnamon	5 mL
¾ tsp	baking powder	3 mL
¼ tsp	freshly grated nutmeg	1 mL
¼ tsp	salt	1 mL
¾ cup	packed brown sugar	175 mL
½ cup	butter or margarine, softened	125 mL
2	eggs	2
2 tbsp	light (fancy) molasses	25 mL

1. In a bowl, combine raisins, candied fruit, orange peel, candied ginger and orange and lemon zests. Add brandy and stir well. Set aside for 1 hour.
2. In a separate bowl, mix together flour, bread crumbs, almonds, cinnamon, baking powder, nutmeg and salt. Set aside.
3. In a clean bowl, beat brown sugar and butter until creamy. Beat in eggs and molasses until incorporated. Stir in soaked fruit mixture. Add flour mixture and mix just until blended. Spoon batter into prepared dish. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and let stand in refrigerator for 1 week, spooning additional brandy over the top two or three times in 1-tbsp (15 mL) increments.
4. Remove plastic wrap. Cover tightly with foil and secure with a string. Place dish in slow cooker stoneware and pour in enough boiling water to reach 1 inch (2.5 cm) up the sides of the dish. Cover and cook on High for 4 hours, until a toothpick inserted in the center of the pudding comes out clean. Serve hot.

