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BEST CHEAP SLOW COOKERS



Proctor Silex 33015 1.5-Quart Round Slow Cooker

A small capacity cooker with dishwasher-safe cooking insert and easy-to-understand controls;

users like the three heat settings (unusual for smaller cookers) and excellent results.

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Rival 3040 4-Quart Round Slow Cooker

This reliable slow cooker features two cook settings, see-through lid, and removable stoneware crock; users say it's easy to clean, does a good job on roasts

and stews, and needs a 'warm' setting, but some complain it loses heat out of the sides.

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GOOD CHEAP SLOW COOKERS



Hamilton Beach 7-Qt. Slow Cooker With Travel Case, 33690

Another easy-to-use slow cooker with keep-warm setting and dishwasher-safe glass lid and

stoneware crock; good size for soups and larger roasts but some users grumble about the absence of an indicator light.

October 6, 2009

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Slow Cooker Reviews, Best Cheap Crock Pots

Filed in: Appliance, Cooking, Family, Food, Home and Garden, Kitchen, Slow Cookers

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\$8

\$35

\$90

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BEST CHEAP SLOW COOKERS

Proctor Silex 33015 1.5-Quart Round Slow Cooker starting at \$18

Rival 3040 4-Quart Round Slow Cooker starting at \$25



GOOD CHEAP SLOW COOKERS

Hamilton Beach 7-Qt. Slow Cooker With Travel Case, 33690 starting at \$35

Crock-Pot Smart-Pot Slow Cooker SCVP550 starting at \$29

DON'T BOTHER CHEAP SLOW COOKERS »

Cheap Slow Cookers Buying Guide

Slow cookers have been around forever, but didn't appear in modern guise until 1971 when Rival introduced the Crock-Pot. That brand name has become so synonymous with slow-cooking appliances that they are often just referred to as crock pots.



Today, the slow-cooker market is dominated by makers like Crock-Pot/Rival, Hamilton Beach, Proctor Silex, and West Bend. Although you can spend \$300 for a 7-Qt. slow cooker with a cast-aluminum cooking chamber made by All-Clad for Williams-Sonoma, you can also spend about one-tenth that amount for an appliance that delivers moist and flavorful meals.

Regardless of price, slow cookers all operate pretty much the same way and have the same basic components. There's a lid (sometimes hinged, most often made of glass), an insulated outer shell that contains built-in heating elements, and nestled within that shell is the

cooking chamber (on modern slow cookers, removable and dishwasher-safe crocks are now standard). The cooking process proceeds via indirect heat that transfers from the heating elements to the inner container.

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What to Look For: Cheap Slow Cooker Features

Low-cost Slow Cookers Size: Slow cookers come in a range of sizes. The smallest and most basic slow cookers - sometimes called dippers, such as the 16-ounce Little Dipper from Rival (starting at \$11, Amazon) - are designed primarily to hold food like dips and sauces at proper serving temperature for hours. They are not meant to cook whole meals or a wide variety of food types and typically feature just a "warm" mode.

For actual cooking, you need a larger model. Meal preparation for one or two people calls for a small slow cooker, like the Proctor Silex 33015 1.5-Quart Round Slow Cooker (starting at \$14, Amazon); one of few models of this size, it has three temperature settings (high, low, keep warm) as well as an "off" setting. Feeding a family of four or five moves you up the size ladder, where your options expand considerably: the Rival 3040 (starting at \$20, Amazon) is a 4-Qt. model and its larger and programmable sibling, the Rival 38501 (starting at \$34, Amazon) has a 5-Qt. capacity; the semi-programmable Crock-Pot Smart-Pot SCVP550 (starting at \$29, Amazon), at 5.5 quarts is slightly larger. If you cook for a crowd or like to prepare enough for leftovers, you'll want a slow cooker with more capacity, like the 6-Qt. West Bend 85156 (starting at \$45, Amazon) or 7-Qt. Hamilton Beach 33690 (starting at \$35, Amazon).

Review continues below

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Crock-Pot Smart-Pot Slow Cooker SCVP550

With four time and temperature settings plus auto-warm, dishwasher-safe stoneware crock, this slow cooker wins relatively positive reviews for its

ease of use and tasty results; some users say it cooks hot and fast, and the loose-fitting lid allows steam to escape.

CHEAP DEALS



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Cheap Organic food

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Inexpensive Bordeaux wine

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DON'T BOTHER CHEAP SLOW COOKERS



Kalorik SC-11047

Low prices doesn't compensate for design and manufacturing flaws; three-legged oval-shaped model can tip and markings for



Hamilton Beach 33966 6-Quart Slow Cooker
Instawares, LLC: \$52.40
Cookware.com: \$54.99
Today'sConcept.com: \$56.59

See all prices »



Hamilton Beach Stay-or-Go 33162 6-Quart Slow Cooker
Amazon: \$32.00
Buy.com: \$42.94
Beach Camera.com: \$39.95

See all prices »



Cuisinart CSC-650 6.5-Quart Slow Cooker
Amazon: \$89.74
CHEFS Catalog: \$99.95
Sears: \$89.95

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\$20 - \$30 (32)
\$30 - \$40 (24)
\$40 - \$60 (35)
Above \$60 (27)



see prices from 32.00 - 99.95 »

To be prepared for all contingencies, there are slow cookers with multiple crocks. The Hamilton Beach 3-in-One Slow Cooker ([starting at \\$35, Amazon](#)) comes with two-, four-, and six-quart stoneware crocks. The Rival 64451LD-C 6.5-Quart Slow Cooker ([starting at \\$40, Amazon](#)) comes with a 16-ounce crock pot "dipper."

Cheap Slow Cookers Settings . The cooking/temperature settings on cheap slow cookers are either manual or programmable. Nearly every inexpensive manual or programmable slow cooker has a low and high setting, but many, like the Proctor Silex 33015 and Hamilton Beach 7-Qt. Slow Cooker 33690BV ([starting at \\$35, Amazon](#)) , also have a keep-warm function. Then there are the slow cookers with adjustable temperature controls, like the West Bend 84905 ([starting at \\$44, Amazon](#)), whose base doubles as a small griddle. Higher-end models, like the Cuisinart PSC-400 4-Quart Programmable Slow Cooker PSC-400 ([starting at \\$80, Amazon](#)), may have a simmer mode and an on/off switch. It's important to note, however, that despite the stated high and low cooking settings, we found numerous consumer complaints about many models that cook too hot and too fast.

Slow cookers with timers give you lots of freedom to plan and execute meals. More commonly found on pricier models, like the All-Clad 99009 Stainless-Steel 6-1/2-Quart Slow Cooker ([starting at \\$150, Amazon](#)), programmable timers let you choose how long the food should cook before switching to keep-warm mode. In the budget slow-cooker category, the Crock-Pot Smart-Pot SCVP550 lets you choose among four or six hours on high, or eight or ten hours on low and automatically switches to warm when time is up. The Crock-Pot Countdown Slow Cooker SCRC501-SS ([starting at \\$40, Amazon](#)) has a timer that you can set in 30-minute increments up to 20 hours and gives a running countdown of time remaining; expert testers at [Real Simple](#) magazine specifically mention this programming feature in a brief slow cooker review.

Inexpensive Slow Cookers Safety. Slow cooking is a perfectly safe way to prepare food despite some folks' concerns about cooking at low temperatures. The [FDA](#) has extensively tested and studied this method over the years and concluded time and again that there is no cause for worry if consumers follow the slow cooker's recommended guidelines.

Review continues below

[Top Slow Cookers](#)

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Regarding the safety of the appliance itself, remember that these slow cookers get very hot inside - outside, too, sometimes, so be sure to keep potholders handy. Still, some models are designed with "cool touch" features; according to experts at [Howstuffworks.com](#), the handles on the base of the Proctor Silex 33015 stay cool so you can easily move the cooker around. The Hamilton Beach 33690 comes with an insulated carrying case and a strap that fits around the handles and holds the lid in place; its tempered glass lid also stays cool. Several models from West Bend, including the six-quart 85156 and the five-quart 84315 ([starting at \\$35](#)), and from Kalorik, including the 3.5-quart SC-11047 cookers ([starting at \\$25, Amazon](#)) feature cool-touch handles. Even so, consumers report safety problems with the Kalorik SC-11047: one slow cooker review by an [Amazon](#) user says this three-legged oval-shaped model easily tips over, and several consumer posts on [Overstock.com](#) warn that the markings for the high and low settings are reversed (a notice to that effect does come inside the product package).

Cheap Slow Cookers Cleanup and Maintenance The inner cooking chambers in the original slow cookers were not removable, making them cumbersome and hard to clean. These days virtually all slow cookers, whatever the price, feature removable and dishwasher-safe inner pots; many are stoneware, others are nonstick. Among the slow cooker reviews that we read, nearly all users commenting on this issue say food doesn't stick and clean up is easy. Using these removable inserts as a serving dish is a side benefit that also means one less item to wash.

high and low settings are reversed.



Rival 38501 Round 5-Quart Smart-Pot Crock-Pot

Despite programmable temperature controls and auto-warm setting, user reviews are overwhelmingly negative; most complaints concern temperature levels, with food cooking too hot and too fast.

Products Mentioned in This Review

- [Kalerik SC-11047](#)
- [Rival 38501 Round 5-Quart Smart-Pot Crock-Pot](#)
- [Hamilton Beach 7-Qt. Slow Cooker With Travel Case, 33690](#)
- [Crock-Pot Smart-Pot Slow Cooker SCVP550](#)
- [Proctor Silex 33015 1.5-Quart Round Slow Cooker](#)
- [Rival 3040 4-Quart Round Slow Cooker](#)

Thrifty Resources

Still, there are a few simple things you can do to keep your slow cooker in good working order. Rival and Hamilton Beach, for example, warn consumers never to put a hot stoneware crock into cold water or to put the heating unit (i.e., the base) in water of any temperature. West End suggests wiping the inside of the crock with a tiny amount of vegetable oil after coming out of the dishwasher to restore its nonstick properties. A mixture of hot water and white vinegar should get rid of cooking stains. And some consumers like to use liners, which makes clean up faster and saves wear and tear on the cooking container.

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What to Expect: Cheap Slow Cookers Performance

Cheap Slow Cooker Results. All these features won't mean much if the food prepared in your slow cooker doesn't satisfy your taste buds. According to slow cooker reviews by users and experts, both the Proctor Silex 33015 and Rival 3040 perform well across the culinary field. A cheap slow cookers review on [Howtuffworks.com](#) says the compact Proctor Silex does a fine job on oatmeal, chili, and even fondue. The vast majority of consumer reviews posted on [Amazon](#) about the Proctor Silex 33015 likewise applaud the taste, moisture, and versatility of the finished product. For one consumer, who writes on [Epinions](#) about her expertise in pulling meals out of the freezer, the Rival 3040 has given her confidence to take on some of the family's cooking chores, knowing the dish will be tasty and ready on time. Another Rival 3040 user comments on [Viewpoints](#) that the slow cooker gives the chef virtually unlimited opportunities to be creative, and a tester from [Slate](#) who compared eight slow cookers liked the consistency and taste of an Indian pudding and herbed lima beans she prepared in the Rival 3040.

The Hamilton Beach 33690 and the Crock-Pot SCVP550 also meet users' expectations. The majority of users posting on [Walmart](#) give the Hamilton Beach 33690 high marks for cooking up roasts, stews, and soups, for its 7-Qt. size and overall value; and unlike other slow cookers with high and low settings that are basically the same, write one consumer on [Epinions](#), the two heat settings on this model actually mean something. Consumers posting on the [Target](#) site report the Crock Pot SCVP550 yields meat that is moist and tender, and one [Walmart](#) shopper says she can use cheaper cuts of meat and still get excellent results. Several consumers posting on [Target](#) and [Sharedreviews.com](#), however, say the SCVP550 cooks a little hot and fast, and suggest adding a bit more moisture and/or shortening the cooking time.

Budget Slow Cookers Reliability. With proper care and cleaning, inexpensive slow cookers may last quite a while. Some people are still using vintage slow cookers from the 1970s. One owner writes on [Epinions](#) of having used the Hamilton Beach 33690 for some 10 years without any problems. The super-cheap Proctor Silex 33015 also garners positive reviews on [Amazon](#) for its durability from consumers who use it daily. But like many inexpensive appliances, some disappoint: where one consumer raves about a product's longevity, another gripes about the opposite experience. User reviews for the Crock-Pot Countdown on [Walmart](#), for example, are illustrative of the divide: some say the timer and settings work as they're meant to while others report electrical malfunctions and excessive heat.

In sum, you'll find that these slow cookers may need a bit of oversight and recipe adjustments as you learn their eccentricities, but they certainly let you go about your business while the heavy-duty cooking takes care of itself.

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