Healthy Recipe of the Month
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In the summer months, it can be hard to think of easy, creative meals that don't heat up the kitchen. I find using a crock pot to cook up a pot of pinto beans a huge time saver, and a delicious start towards several tasty and easy meals. Once you have beans in the refrigerator, you can refry them for tostadas, burros, or as a complement to enchiladas or tamales. The whole beans and their broth can be used as a soup, or as a base for chili.

Email me and let me know if you try any of these recipes!

Crock Pot Beans

Dried pinto beans, about 3-4 cups
Salt pork, (found in the section by the ham in most grocery stores). A 1 inch cube is all you need to flavor a pot of beans. Put the remaining salt pork in a freezer bag and store until you need it for the next pot of beans.

Sort and clean (discard small rocks or beans that look shriveled) enough dried pinto beans to fill 1/3 of your crock pot. Rinse 3-4 times with water, then fill with water to within 2 inches of the top, about 1/3 beans to 2/3 water. Add a 1" cube of salt pork. Cover and cook on low 10-12 hours or on high 6 to 7 hours. Beans are tasty just as they are. When done, add salt and any seasonings you like, such as cumin, garlic, or onions.

Refried Beans
(refried beans, or frijoles, actually fry the cooked beans in lard or pork fat before they are mashed. For a more heart healthy version, try this method where no added fat is needed - use the broth to moisten.)
Heat a fry pan over medium heat for a few minutes, then add the desired amount of crock pot beans, along with some of the broth. When bubbly, turn down the heat and simmer, having enough liquid to keep the beans from becoming too dry. Add salt to taste, then mash with a potato masher. Use refried beans for great bean burros (fold in a flour tortilla) or for tostadas.

**Tostadas**

Tostada shells - you can buy them pre-made or fry your own corn tortillas
Refried beans
A platter of dark green lettuce leaves, chopped green onion, chopped radishes, chopped tomatoes, avocado slices

Take a tostada shell, and cover with refried beans. Top with an assortment of vegetables, a dab of lowfat plain yogurt and salsa. For a complete meal, have slices of watermelon or cantaloupe for dessert.