

Electric Pressure Cookers

The electric pressure cooker is a popular kitchen tool, but it takes time to learn how to use it properly. Electric pressure cookers, like the popular Instant Pot, cook food three to ten times faster than a conventional oven.

- This quicker cooking time saves time and energy and can lower your fuel bills.
- Electric pressure cookers can save you money by allowing you to buy less-tender cuts of meat.
- Faster cooking times allow foods to retain more moisture and nutrients.

On the other hand, it can be difficult to cook a variety of different foods at the same time with an electric pressure cooker.

- Different foods cook at different rates, so you have to pay close attention to timing to have all of your dishes ready at the same time.
- It can be easy to overcook foods because you can't monitor their doneness during the cooking process.
- It is difficult to add or adjust seasonings during the cooking process.

Tips for Using an Electric Pressure Cooker

- Read the owner's manual before you start.
- Use plenty of liquid because the unit cooks with steam.
- Plan before you cook by reading your recipe, planning enough time, and making sure you have the equipment needed.
- Use the delay timer to set the appliance to start at any time. Be aware of food safety issues when using this feature. Bacteria grow most quickly between 40 and 140°F, doubling in number in as little as 20 minutes. This temperature range is called the "danger zone."

Cooking Tips

- Electric pressure cookers cook by surface area, so large pieces of meat cook slower than smaller pieces.
- Do not overfill the inner pot.
- The sealing rings may take on the flavors of the food being prepared, so use separate rings for strong- and mild-flavored foods.
- Cook large batches of foods like eggs and chicken to use in recipes throughout the week.
- Cook and shred meat to use in tacos or casseroles, or as you would use rotisserie chicken or pulled pork.
- For quicker cooking foods, use a steam insert, wrap in foil, or put in an oven-safe container.
 - ◊ You can add quicker cooking foods during the cooking process, but you must depressurize the unit first. The unit will reheat quickly.
- Use caution with dairy and cheese (unless making yogurt).
 - ◊ Add milk and cheeses after the pressure-cooking process. Use the sauté function and stir in dairy products.
- Thicken after cooking because adding a thickener, such as flour or cornstarch, during the pressure-cooking process will interfere with the steam, and the degree of thickening will be hard to control.
- Be sure to use the correct cut of meat. Pressure cookers allow you to use cheaper cuts that are less tender, but give you a tender piece that is comparable to more expensive cuts.

Choosing an Electric Pressure Cooker

When deciding which electric pressure cooker to buy, answer these questions:

- How often will you use the pressure cooker?
- How many people will you be feeding?
 - ◊ Four-quart electric pressure cookers are best for singles or couples and one-course meals. Six-quart cookers are the most popular size for families. Eight-quart cookers are best for larger families and large-quantity recipes.
- What features are you looking for?
 - ◊ If you have a specific food in mind that you want to cook, such as yogurt or rice, make sure the pressure cooker you choose is designed for that use. If you want your pressure cooker to double as a slow cooker or food warmer, choose one with those features.
- What is your budget for the appliance?
 - ◊ Electric pressure cookers range in price from \$60 to \$300. Choose one that will serve your needs and that fits into your budget.
- Where will you store the new appliance?

Terms

HP	High-pressure mode.
LP	Low-pressure mode.
Manual or pressure cook	Use these to set custom time and/or pressure level.
Natural pressure release (NR or NPR)	Allows the cooker to cool down naturally until the float valve drops down. Can take up to 40 minutes or longer, depending on the amount of food in the cooker.
Quick pressure release (QR or QPR)	Turn the steam release handle or press the QR button to the venting position to let out steam until the float valve drops down. QR is not suitable for foods with a large liquid volume or high starch content such as oatmeal, beans, starchy soups, etc.
Steam rack (trivet)	Place inside the inner pot to elevate food above the water.
Burn	May not have enough water/broth in the inner pot, and your food may stick to the bottom of the inner pot.
Cooker base	Contains the microprocessor and the heating element. Never place anything in the base without the inner pot.
Delay start or timer	Allows you to set the unit to start at a certain time.
Float valve (pin)	Pin inside the steam valve; when it is up, the cooker is fully pressurized, and when it drops, it is no longer pressurized and the cooker may be opened.
Pot-in-pot (PIP)	Placing a pot or container inside the inner pot for cooking. This allows you to cook more than one food at a time or smaller servings.
Sealing ring	Fits into the pressure cooker's lid and must be in place when using the cooker.

Source: <https://instantpot.com/faq/instant-pot-glossary/>

Cleaning the Electric Pressure Cooker

Everyday Cleaning

- Unplug the unit.
- Wash the inner pot after each use by hand or in the dishwasher.
- Wash the ring after each use by hand or in the dishwasher.
- Wipe both the inside and outside of the cooker with a wet cloth.
- Wipe the inside of the lid with a damp cloth.

Deep Cleaning

- Unplug the unit.
- Clean the housing unit by wiping it with a damp cloth both inside and outside. Use a small brush to get into the small areas.
- Hand-wash the lid with warm, soapy water.
- Check the smaller parts and around the stem valve. Remove and clean around the release valve and steam valve cover. Inspect the condensation collection cup.
- Clean the sealing ring.
- Wash the inner pot and accessories.
- Reassemble.

Cleaning the Sealing Ring

- To rid your sealing ring of any foul odors, put 1 cup water, 1 cup vinegar, and a few lemon peels in the inner pot. Run the cooker on the steam setting for 2 minutes and let the pressure release naturally. Take the ring off and let air dry.

Vegetable Cooking Times

Manual setting

High pressure

Add 1 cup water to cooker.

Use less time for small portions and more time for large portions.

These vegetables benefit from a 5-minute natural pressure release (NPR).

Vegetable	Minutes to Cook
Sweet peppers	1-3
Mixed vegetables	1-2
Asparagus	1-2
Broccoli	0-1
Cauliflower, chopped	2-3
Whole beets	11-13
Brussels sprouts	2-3
Cabbage, shredded	2-3

Vegetable	Minutes to Cook
Carrots	6-8
Green beans	2-3
Acorn squash, halved	8-10
Spaghetti squash, halved	7
Artichokes, medium to large	10
*Sweet potatoes	12-15
Corn on the cob	2-3
*Russet potatoes	14

**Pierce a couple of times with a fork before cooking.*

Meat Cooking Times

Meat	Minutes to Cook	Safe Minimum Internal Temperature	Meat	Minutes to Cook	Safe Minimum Internal Temperature
Fish, whole, fresh	4–5	145°F	Turkey, breasts	7–10	165°F
Fish, whole, frozen	5–7	145°F	Meatballs, fresh	5 (per pound)	160°F
Fish, fillet, fresh	2–3	145°F	Shellfish, crab	2–3	flesh pearly and opaque
Fish, fillet, frozen	3–4	145°F	Shellfish, lobster	2–3	flesh pearly and opaque
Whole chicken	8 (per pound)	165°F	Pork, tenderloin	20 (per pound)	145°F
Beef, pork, veal, lamb (steaks, chops, roasts)	20 (per pound)	145°F	Beef roast	15 (per pound)	145°F
Pork, extra lean	15–20 (per pound)	145°F	Eggs and egg dishes	yolk and white should be firm; scrambled eggs should not be runny	160°F
Shrimp	1–3	flesh pearly and opaque	Reheated leftovers		165°F
Chicken breasts	6–8	165°F			
Chicken thighs	10–15	165°F			
Turkey, ground	Sauté function	165°F			

Add 1–3 minutes if the meat you are cooking is frozen.

You may want to brown/sear the meat on the sauté/sear setting.

For more information, check out [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov).

Food Safety

- Always use a meat thermometer to check the internal food temperature before serving to ensure food is cooked properly.
- Opening the lid before the cook time is complete can cause uneven cooking and could cause the cooker not to reach the desired temperature.
- Do not overfill the pot, as this can lead to cook time inconsistencies and uneven temperature distribution.
- Thicker cuts of meat need to be thinned or avoided when cooking in an instant pot, as they can cook unevenly and leave parts uncooked.

References

<https://instantpot.com/faq/instant-pot-glossary/>

<https://www.pressurecookingtoday.com>

<https://instantpot.com/english-manuals/>

<https://www.fightbac.org/>

<https://www.fightbac.org/food-safety-basics/the-core-four-practices/>

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Publication 3564 (POD-01-21)

By **Qula Madkin**, Extension Instructor, Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion; **Janet Jolley**, Extension Agent, Marshall County; and dietetic interns **Arlie Brandon** and **Jonathan Bernardo**.

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Produced by Agricultural Communications.

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Extension Service of Mississippi State University, cooperating with U.S. Department of Agriculture. Published in furtherance of Acts of Congress, May 8 and June 30, 1914. GARY B. JACKSON, Director