

TRY THIS SIMPLE SLOW COOKER

BY REV. J.D. HOOKER

While on a church outing at Indian Springs Campground, just south of Garrett, Indiana, my wife called me over to have a look at the unique homemade slow cooker one of the young mothers was using. I knew instantly that I was looking at something most of *BHM*'s other readers would find just as interesting as I did.

"Actually," the young lady explained to us, "I was just looking for a really cheap, but effective, way to keep food hot when we take the boys on picnics and such. It took me a while before I figured out that this could cook things just as well as my electric crock pot does. Since then, though, I use this nearly every day."

Her homebuilt slow cooker is exceptionally simple, both to fashion and to use. So naturally, a couple of days later I took a couple of hours and put one together for my wife, Connie.

All that I needed to put together a nice working replica of the simple slow cooker this young church-going

mother had fashioned was a sheet of two-inch thick styrofoam insulation (the tough blue stuff most concrete suppliers sell for insulating footings is ideal for this), an old stainless steel stock pot and lid (bought for \$2.50 at the Salvation Army store), some paste type car wax, a little bit of construction adhesive, one spray can of expanding styrofoam insulation, and part of a cardboard box.

First off, I cut five pieces of the two-inch thick insulation to shape a square box into which the stock pot would slide easily, as shown in Figure 1. The four side pieces are cut the same height as the pot and two inches wider than the pot's diameter. The bottom piece is cut square four inches longer than the diameter of the pot. After gluing this box together with the construction adhesive, I used the automotive wax to polish the exterior of the stock pot, using three coats and buffing each to a high shine. This is done after removal of the handles to make the pot a smooth fit in the box.

Next I inserted the pot into the foam box, and used some of the expanding foam to fill in the empty spaces at the corners for a perfect fit, as shown.

Later, once this canned foam had set up, I carefully worked the well-waxed pot loose and removed it from the insulated box. Then I really lightly sanded the inside of the hardened insulation with coarse sandpaper so the pot would just slip in and out easily for washing after each use.

I waxed the lid in the same fashion, then set it inside of the cut-down cardboard box which had simply been smeared with a heavy layer of the paste wax (**Figure 2**). Then I cut a piece of the two-inch styrofoam to just fit inside of the box, covered the lid with the remainder of the can of expanding foam, and pressed the cut styrofoam piece on top, as shown. Later, I lightly sanded the inside of this lid cover so it could be easily removed and replaced on the top of the slow cooker.

Once the whole thing was completed, I assembled it together. At each corner I shoved a three-inch-long piece of half-inch wooden dowel down through the top foam cover into the sides of the insulated box. This should ensure that everything lines up perfectly, but probably isn't really necessary (**Figure 3**).

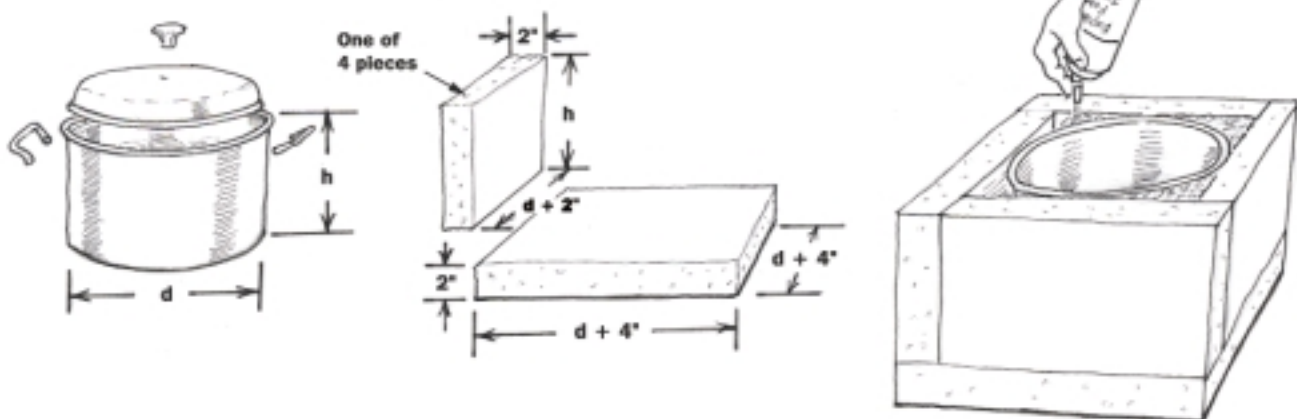


Figure 1: Cut and glue together five pieces of two-inch styrofoam pieces, insert well-waxed pot after removing the handles, and fill empty spaces with expanding foam insulation. Note the dimensions of the five foam pieces.

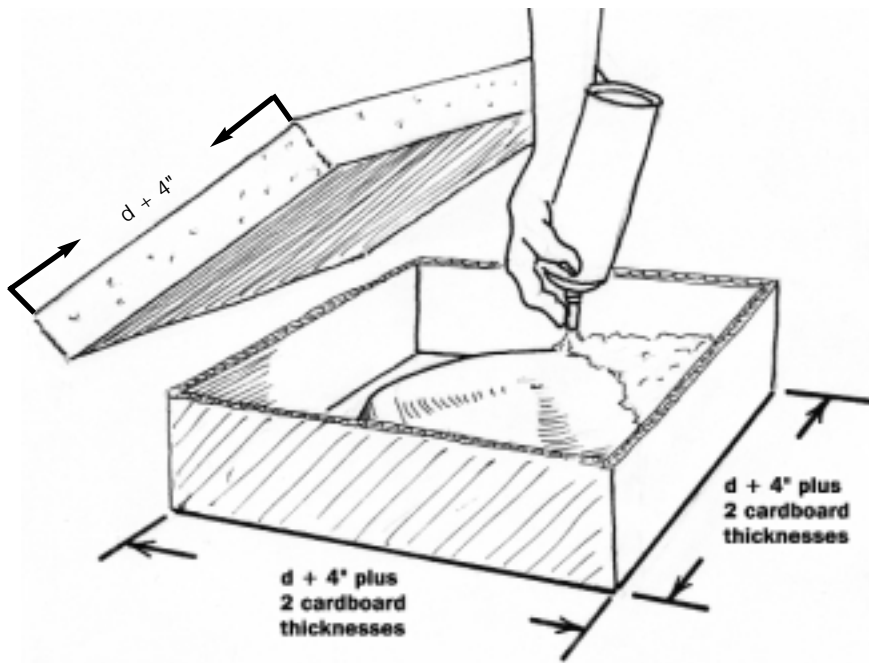


Figure 2: Place waxed lid (after removing lid handle) inside waxed cardboard box, cover with expanding foam insulation, then press piece of two-inch thick foam insulation into box, on top of the expanding foam. Note the dimensions.

The day after I'd finished up, my wife was ready to use her new cooking device. First she strained off the water in which a pound of speckled Jacob's cattle beans had been soaked, reserving the liquid in a separate pan while the beans went inside of the insulated pot.

Next she finely diced about half a pound of leftover ham and a large onion and added them to the water she'd drained off the beans. Then she set the pan on the stove and brought

the mix to a full, rapid boil. This boiling mixture was then poured in with

the beans inside the insulated pot, and the lid and the insulated cover were quickly set in place on top. The whole thing was then just left alone to sit for about three hours.

At supper time, we found the contents still piping hot, and indistinguishable from ham and beans prepared in any regular crock pot.

You can use any recipe that you'd normally use in any other slow cooker. The difference is that you must always bring the cooking liquid to a full rolling boil and add it to the pot last, after all of the other ingredients. You also need to close the cooker up as quickly as you can once the boiling liquid has been added. Having something of an artistic nature, my wife rounded off the corners of our new slow cooker with some sandpaper, covered the exterior with paint, and stenciled colorful flower designs all over the outside. I'll admit it now looks just as good as it works, but I'd still say the painting is optional. Δ

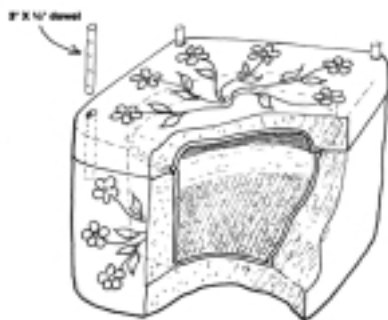



Figure 3: After assembling the two slow cooker pieces, you can secure them together with dowels if you wish. My wife rounded off the corners of ours, then decorated it.

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