

COOKERS

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hour? Yup.

The Instant Pot has insulated housing, which makes it energy efficient. You have to seal the pressure valve, and then it locks itself during the pressure-cooking process, which results in no cooking smells. You might think that a pro or a con (I'm a fan of cooking smells myself). The pot raises, monitors and adjusts the pressure automatically, and when the cooking time is finished the valve is released to bring the pressure back down (some recipes say you should release the pressure valve manually, while others allow for the Instant Pot to do this automatically and slowly). The food should be allowed to sit in the Instant Pot until the release time is over — most recipes will be clear on that, and the pot itself unlocks when it's time to remove the food.

You can certainly use the slow-cooker function on an Instant Pot, but many slow-cooker fans don't think it's

as good as a designated slow cooker. Because the Instant Pot seals itself so well, even when it's not on the pressure-cook mode there is less liquid able to evaporate than with a traditional slow cooker. This may result in some liquid left at the end, and less reduction and thickening of sauce as the food cooks.

Most Instant Pots have smart, built-in programs like "rice" or "bean/chili" so you can make certain foods with the press of a button. But overall, it's less intuitive than a slow cooker, so you should find recipes with explicit Instant Pot instructions. Once you get the hang of it, then you can experiment more.

For steaming, or for other recipes where you don't want the food submerged in liquid, there is a rack insert to keep the food suspended above a small amount of water or other liquid. This means you can make foods in your Instant Pot that you would not usually make in a slow cooker, such as a lasagna in a pan. There are pans designed just for using in the

Instant Pot on the market, and also some silicone slings and other inserts designed for cooking specific foods, such as eggs, and lifting foods from the machine.

THE SLOW COOKER

As the name suggests, the slow cooker cooks foods low and slow, with a temperature range of about 175 degrees F to 200 degrees F. There are usually only two settings, low and high; the high setting usually has a minimum cooking time of four hours and a maximum of six, with the low offering a choice between eight and 10 hours.

Most recipes specify which setting and amount of time to use, but I've found that some recipes — like a roast or pork shoulder — can be flexible, so you may choose a setting and time based on how much time you have (for example, if you are cooking something in the afternoon for dinner, or overnight while you sleep).

The slow cooker is more intuitive for most cooks than the Instant Pot. Fewer functions (one) mean fewer buttons, and it's harder to

mess anything up.

Slow cookers are available in sizes up to 10 quarts, while Instant Pots top out at 8 quarts, so if big-batch cooking is your thing, that's a consideration.

WHAT THEY BOTH DO

Both machines are good for foods with lots of moisture and long cooking times, such as soups, chilies, stews and braises. With both, the cooking time can usually be preset, and foods can be kept warm after cooking is finished.

WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

If you are a person with lots of the appliances that an Instant Pot can replicate, such as a yogurt maker, a slow cooker, a pressure cooker and a rice maker, then boy, will you save a lot of storage space with this one device. And if you are a last-minute dinner maker, then the Instant Pot might become an invaluable tool. But if you are someone who plans ahead, loves slow-cooked foods, and wants to walk in the door to a house filled with the scent of dinner waiting to be served up, then stick with the

slow cooker.

Me? I have both. And I use both. I use my big slow cooker for slow cooking, and I use my Instant Pot mostly

for searing and pressure cooking. At some point, I might pick a lane and stick to it, but for now, I'm making room for both of them.

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PASTA

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medium heat until shimmering. Add leeks and pinch salt and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until leeks begin to brown, about 5 minutes. Add asparagus spears and cook until asparagus is crisp-tender, 4 to 6 minutes. Add pepper flakes and remaining garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add remaining 1 cup of peas and continue to cook for 1 minute

longer. Transfer vegetables to bowl and set aside. Wipe out pot with paper towels.

Heat remaining 1/4 cup oil in now-empty pot over medium heat until shimmering. Add pasta and cook, stirring often, until just beginning to brown, about 5 minutes. Add wine and cook, stirring constantly, until absorbed, about 2 minutes.

When wine is fully absorbed, add warm broth and bring to boil. Cook, stirring frequently, until most of liquid is absorbed

and pasta is al dente, 8 to 10 minutes. Off heat, stir in Parmesan, lemon juice, vegetables, and half of herb mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve immediately, passing extra Parmesan and remaining herb mixture separately.

Nutrition information per serving: 605 calories; 155 calories from fat; 17 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 4 mg cholesterol; 436 mg sodium; 88 g carbohydrate; 10 g fiber; 13 g sugar; 18 g protein.

BULBS

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the market and limiting its availability.

Large-cupped daffodils — cups are more than half the length of the flower segments, but not as long as segments. 'Carlton' is an example as is the double-flowered 'Ice Follies.'

Small-cupped daffodils — cups are less than half the length of the petals.

Double daffodils — 'Golden ducat' for example.

Split corona or butterfly — the cup is split in segments and lies more or less flat against the other petals.

Triandrus hybrids — clusters of medium-sized, slender-cupped flowers. 'Thalia' is an example of a white triandrus.

Cyclamineus hybrids — early medium-sized flowers with recurved petals which make the flower resemble the shape of a cyclamen.

Jonquilla hybrids — clusters of two to four

Garden Chores

- Dormant sprays can be applied to ornamental trees and shrubs now. Do this on a mild day while temperatures are above freezing.
- To control iris borer, clean up and destroy the old foliage before new growth begins.
- Fertilize bulbs with a bulb booster formulation broadcast over the planting beds. Hose off any granules that stick to foliage.
- Seeds of hardy annuals such as larkspur, bachelor's buttons, Shirley and California poppies should be direct sown in the garden now.
- Apply sulfur to the soils around acid-loving plants such as azaleas, rhododendrons, hollies, blueberries, and dogwoods. Use a granular formulation at the rate of 1/2-pound per 100 square ft.
- Continue pruning grapes. Bleeding causes no injury to the vines. Tie vines to the trellis before the buds swell to prevent bud injury and crop loss.
- Cleft and splice grafting can be done now. This must be completed before rootstocks break dormancy.

— Wendy Schmidt

rather small, very fragrant flowers.

Tazetta and tazetta hybrids—these are bunch-flowered daffodils with small-cupped white and yellow flowers in clusters. 'Erlcheer,' and 'Golden cheerfulness' are tazettas.

Poeticus narcissus, the Poet's narcissus — white flowers with shallow broad yellow cups edged red. 'Actaea' is the largest.

Species daffodils

(Narcissus) — as the flowers occurred in nature before the hybridizing began. 'Hoop petticoat,' Jonquil, 'Angel's Tears.

Tulips — easily identified as the foliage resembles little rabbit ears as it emerges from the ground. Now many of the emerging leaves have been munched by deer. Tulips and their varieties will be covered at a future date.

Violets are now blooming

in some areas. They aren't bulbs, but little rhizomes.

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DORY

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discovery of a sign saying, "I'm a donkey" or some other saying left there by a friendly pat on the back and folks were laughing as you walked by.

These type of things just kept you on your toes that full day because you didn't want to be embarrassed by being caught as the victim of someone singing out, "April Fool." It was all in foolishness and for a laugh.

This year none of us would be caught in running to the window if someone should look outside and alert us to the fact that it is snowing as our winter wanes into spring. The winter has lasted long

enough for the snow not to be a novelty even yet.

My mother was a woman who had served everyone all her life with kindness and gentleness and yet from her sickbed said, "In case I forget to tell you, thank you for everything you have done for me."

Today would have been her 115th birthday, and I wish I could tell her "Happy Birthday, Mom" — and no April Fool.

COMMUNITY BAND NORTHEAST

We start our practice sessions this evening from 7-9 p.m. and welcome newcomers to Loso Hall on the Eastern Oregon University campus. During last term's free concert we played a

John Philip Sousa march, the concert band selection of The Sound of Music, Amazing Grace hymn, and a variety of others. Who knows what this newly-named non-profit band will come up with this term looking towards another free concert in a couple months. Join us?

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