

Pressure Cooking

FAQs



Modern PRESSURE COOKING

- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS -

Hey, cooking friends!

By now, if you're visiting my website, you've gotten wind that I love pressure cooking so much I wrote a book on it.

“Modern Pressure Cooking” is a love of labor and passion of something my mother taught me at an early age.

I'm so thankful for the gift of being efficient without sacrificing the true joy of cooking and making delicious meals.



Along the way over the last 10 or so years of blogging and writing food articles, many of you have asked really great questions about pressure cooking and how it works. It is really good for you?

Does the food really better taste? Are they dangerous like my grandma used to warn? Since the book came out, the questions have quadrupled -- a great sign more people are exploring it -- and gotten even better; with some scientific angling to the queries.

Pressure-cooking is all about science so those questions; in particular, give me great fodder for conversation and more evangelism, as I call it.

But, since all questions are important and will help you become a pressure-cooking enthusiast, I've created a FAQ that will answer and address the most critical questions a lot of you have asked.

I hope you find it helpful and will be inspired to purchase and cook lots of deliciousness in an olla de presión.

- Bren Herrera

VISIT BRENHERRERA.COM FOR RECIPES AND TO PURCHASE MY BOOK.

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ARE PRESSURE COOKERS STILL DANGEROUS? CAN YOU ADDRESS MY GIANT FEAR OF THEM EXPLODING?

This is the most asked question from every generation cook I've ever spoken to or worked with. Modern pressure cookers are not dangerous at all. I say this with conviction and excitement knowing that the past 12 or so years I've spent "lobbying" for pressure cooking to make a comeback have finally been worth it. It is true that vintage style and model cookers had a risk factor attached to them, but a lot of the "explosions" you've heard about were caused by user-error. The regulator or "jiggler" on older models is a removable part that could have injured anyone who tried to pry open a cooker while pressure was still in it. The revolutionary technology supporting modern pressure cookers eliminates the fear factor altogether. New cookers, whether stovetop or electric have safety features and locks which do not allow a user to open it under any circumstance unless 100% of the pressure is released. The regulator on both styles are not made of stainless steel or aluminum and thus don't carry the weight of a metal part thrusting up in the air with tremendous velocity. Most are made out of plastic.

Do keep in mind that releasing pressure can require you to turn the pressure valve to one of three positions. Depending on the release method, very hot steam will hose outward. Always, always point the line of the stream away from your body and face. Never place your hands in the line of the steam release valve. See the following questions for suggestions for purchasing a modern cooker.

WHAT KIND OF PRESSURE COOKER SHOULD I BUY?

It depends on what your cooking style and needs are. While the electric pressure cookers (i.e. InstaPot, Fagor Lux Multi-Cooker, Power XL, etc.) are currently the IT cooking gadget, (see Page __ of "Modern Pressure Cooking" for additional insight on the trend; even the TODAY show did a mini feature on the trend recently), nothing will replace the original stovetop cooker when it comes to time-efficiency and even simplicity. All things considered, both styles have their own benefits and place in the modern kitchen.

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Stovetop cookers are great for purists, traditionalists, cooks that like to have more control and the ability to manipulate heat amount, cooking time, etc. They require a little more knowledge and expertise since you're physically controlling the heat amount applied, pressure level, and cook time.

Electric cookers are great for home cooks who are new to pressure-cooking and have less time to do any real kind of monitoring while cooking. Electric cookers have what I call "set and forget" effect and benefit in that you literally hit a preset button and quit worrying or thinking about maintain the necessary pressure level.

Still, stovetop cookers will cook your food faster than electric cookers. If time is really of the essence most times, opt for a stovetop pressure cooker.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A STOVETOP PRESSURE COOKER AND AN ELECTRIC PRESSURE COOKER? AND IS THERE A WAY TO USE A RECIPE FOR A STOVETOP COOKER FOR THE ELECTRIC COOKER?

This is a great question and probably the 2nd most asked question I get.

There are some significant differences between stovetop and electric cooker, namely the heat source. Stovetop cookers are over direct heat, whether on an electric or gas range, and therefore require less cooking time than electric cookers. Most importantly, stovetop cookers allow you to manipulate pressure and cooking time more intentionally than do the electric models. On the flip side, electric cookers offer the benefit of "doing" the job for you. Most basic foods (soups, meats, rice, etc.) have a preset button you can rely on for cooking time without really knowing how long you need to cook something for. And, you don't have to watch the time, per se, with electric cookers. See above for what I call this approach.

Once you set the pressure and time, you can walk away, or forget it, until the alarm goes off. Generally speaking, electric cookers can take up to 20% longer cooking time. This is important to keep in mind when meal planning and are tight with time. My cookbook offers directions for both stovetop and electric pressure cookers.

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CAN I USE MY PRESSURE COOKER FOR CANNING?

Yes! And, it's great! Check out your cooker's manual for detailed information, including recipes for canning. You will need a larger than standard pressure cooker if you're interested in canning a lot of food. A 10 or 12-quart pressure cooker can do the job but you may find yourself canning in batches, unless you have a few cookers, like I do.

DO PRESSURE COOKERS REQUIRE LESS WATER OR LIQUID THAN CONVENTIONAL COOKING VESSELS?

In general, yes. Because you're cooking with higher temperature in shorter amounts of time in a very tightly sealed vessel (loosely, how pressure is achieved) you don't need as much liquid or water. You will also notice with enough observation and practice that your food isn't evaporating as much liquid, allowing for your food to be fuller in flavor, color, and texture. If you're unsure of how much water to use, refer to the recipe.

If you're not using a recipe, rather converting from a conventional or other cooking method, you can reduce water or whatever liquid you're using, by about $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup, generally speaking.

How much cooking time can I really save in a pressure cooker? For example, a rule of thumb I've heard is you can cook pasta in the pressure cooker in half the time as on the stove.

The biggest benefit and appeal of pressure-cooking is timesaving. You can save up to 70% cooking time in a stovetop pressure cooker and up to about 45-50% in an electric cooker, depending on the food. Keep in mind that times saved will vary based on a few things: your cooker, your cooking range, your heat source, and the quality of the ingredients.

Refer to page 24 of my book, "Modern Pressure Cooking" for Cook Times Chart for examples of staple foods.

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CAN YOU MAKE TAMALES IN A PRESSURE COOKER? DO YOU HAVE A RECIPE FOR TAMALES IN YOUR COOKBOOK OR DIRECTIONS FOR THIS ONLINE?

Yes! As you may know, tamales can be a bit laborious if you're making them for the first time; well, every time, really. But they're so freaking good, it's worth it. Once you've made your masa and wrapped your tamale, you can stick them in the pressure cooker with significantly less water than you would use in a stockpot. Cooking time will be tremendously shorter, depending on size and quantity you're cooking. I don't currently have a recipe for tamales in the pressure cooker but I'm enticed. I'll create one and share it here this spring!

WILL TOMATOES FOAM IF COOKED IN EITHER A STOVETOP OR ELECTRIC PRESSURE COOKER?

The short answer is no. The long answer is the same I'd suggest for many of the recipes that have a lot of starch (i.e. pasta): make sure to have enough water in your pressure cooker and know the level of your heat source. Certain foods will begin to foam if the heat or PSI (pressure) is too high and will start coming out of the pressure valve. If that begins to happen in either a stovetop or electric cooker, immediately remove from heat (stovetop) or cancel cooking (electric).

Best tips to keep from scorching foods when cooking in a pressure cooker that isn't non-stick.

Recipes will almost always likely be written in a way that avoids any kind of scorching. However, there are certain instances in which even a recipe may not be able to prevent from scorching. User error is an obvious reason. To keep any food from scorching, especially ingredients, when combined, create thicker and drier consistencies (i.e. roux's, polentas, milk, cheese) make sure to have enough water or liquid. Foods like polenta, grits, and tapioca should be treated with a bit more care and attention and will require more hands on than others. Also, make sure to monitor the level of your heat source, before, during and after pressure has been reached. Too high heat at the wrong time during the cooking process can quickly

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turn a would-be amazing meal to an unfixable situation. Lastly, always read your pressure cooker's user manual when in doubt.

ARE THERE ITEMS YOU SHOULD WAIT TO ADD LATER IN A COOKER TO KEEP FROM BURNING (I.E. TOMATOES OR TOMATO SAUCE)?

There's always a technique to cooking, whether starting with a sauté (think of sofrito) or browning meat. The most essential key to keeping any ingredient or foods from burning in a pressure cooker is to ensure you have enough water, at least one cup. Generally, pressure-cooking allows you to cook most ingredients at once without burning any one specific ingredient. There are instances and recipes that call for layering ingredients (i.e. building a dish such as a cream based soup), which bring out the most flavor in the end.

OTHER THAN YOUR BOOK (WHICH I AM GOING TO BUY) ARE THERE ANY ONLINE RESOURCES OR OTHER BOOKS YOU WOULD RECOMMEND FOR PRESSURE-COOKING?

I like *Cooking Under Pressure*® by Lorna Sass, a true pioneer in teaching the masses how to get into and appreciate pressure-cooking. Also, an online foodie friend has a good website dedicated to pressure-cooking: [Pressure Cooking Today](#). Check out Barbara and her traditional approach to pressure-cooking. Let me be transparent and let you know she reviewed my book and tested one of the recipes. ☺ Finally, Amazon has tons of pressure-cooking titles, including cookbooks that have recipes for stovetop cookers only as well as electric.

That's the bulk of it, friends! I hope this helps you temper some doubts and inspires you to really enjoy the benefits of pressure-cooking. It's a true game changer in your kitchen! If you have any additional questions or would like some guidance or tips, shoot me an [email](#). I'll do my best to get back to you within 48 hours.

¡Buen provecho!

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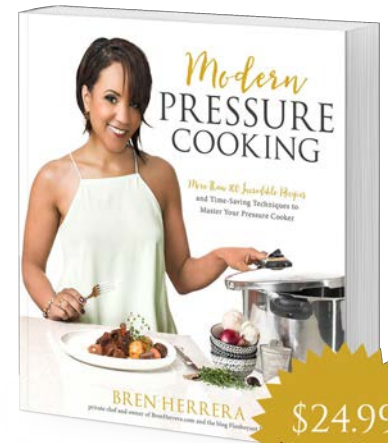
Pressure cooking changed my life when I first started cooking professionally. Mother taught me how to use one of her vintage ones – you know, the ones with the hissing jiggler. She couldn't have given me a better tool in the kitchen. When I tell you that pressure cooking can save you up to 70% cooking time with just about anything, I'm talking truth!

No one wants to slave in the kitchen, spending two + hours cooking something. Ever. With a pressure cooker, you can still enjoy delicious and healthier foods with one of these gadgets. I like to call them the unicorn in the kitchen, really.

Cook round roast and super tender beef short ribs in 30 minutes, even less! How about collard greens in 20? Yes, ma'am. I'm Cuban. We like meat. A lot of red meat. To be able to cook our favorite cuts, like oxtail and tripe – a trendy IT food right now – in less an hour, is to give life to other priorities in our life!

And, finally, who wants to monitor flan in the oven for over an hour when you can quickly have that decadent dessert in just 15 minutes?! That's just a little bird's eye peek at what you can do in the pressure cooker.

I want it to change your life the way it has mine. That's why I wrote Modern Pressure Cooking. Save time, conserve energy, and create really beautiful and delicious time in significantly less time! I hope you'll buy & gift my new book. You'll never approach cooking the same. **Purchase your copy today at brenherrera.com/cookbook.**



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