

A Cook's Journal
Bits & Basics Part 2
by Connie Tucker

Here are some more cooking basics I continue to make over and over. My basics are foundations for more elaborate dishes with ingredients added to spice up my repertoire in the kitchen. You can do the same to save time and effort.

***Basic Nine-Day Coleslaw** If you're a coleslaw lover like I am, you'll find this recipe valuable. It is mayonnaise-free, really does keep for nine days, makes a ton of slaw, and is great to bring to a potluck.*

Ingredients

- 3 lbs cabbage
- 1 green bell pepper
- 2 onions
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup lite olive oil
- 2 tsp table salt (or 4 tsp kosher salt)
- 2 Tbs mustard seed

Directions

Chop cabbage, pepper and onion and set aside in a large bowl. Place the rest of the ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Remove from heat and pour over vegetables. Toss well to coat. Place in container or jar and store in refrigerator. Best after sitting one day. Optional additions are raisins, shredded carrots, or green onions.

***Basic Fruit Cobbler** This is so easy to throw together. You can use most kinds of fruit or berries—whatever is in season, but it is best with apples or peaches.*

Ingredients

- 2 cups peeled and sliced fruit
- 1½ cups sugar (divided)
- ¾ cup flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ¾ cup milk
- Pinch of salt
- 1 stick (1/2 cup) butter

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°. Pour $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the sugar over fruit, mix lightly and set aside. Mix remaining sugar, flour, baking powder, milk, and salt till blended. Place butter in a casserole dish and set in oven. When butter is melted, remove dish from oven, pour in batter, and top with fruit, spreading evenly. Bake 1 hour.

Basic Barbecue Sauce *I find bottled barbecue sauce way too sweet and loaded with all kinds of unpronounceable ingredients. This recipe is delicious, and you control how sweet it will be. You can make large batches and put it up in jars to give as gifts (be sure to check your canner instructions).*

- **Ingredients**
- 1 large onion, minced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 Tbs balsamic or apple cider vinegar
- 6 Tbs lemon juice
- 5 Tbs Worcestershire sauce
- 3 Tbs butter
- 2 cups tomato juice
- 1 small can tomato paste
- 2 cups hot water
- 3 Tbs (or less) brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp celery seed
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Cayenne or red pepper flakes to taste
- Liquid Smoke to taste (optional but very nice if used sparingly)

Directions

Prepare onions and garlic. Place tomato paste in a large saucepan. Add water gradually till well blended. Add remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to very low, cover, and simmer for 1 hour. Adjust salt, pepper, and sugar. Refrigerate in jars. Use within two weeks or so, or freeze in several small containers to extend shelf life.

Basic Roasted Vegetables *What shouts “comfort food” more than oven-roasted veggies? Well, maybe mac and cheese, but really, this is so easy to make and you might even get your kids to eat them.*

You can use any root vegetable like potatoes, beets, carrots, as well as apples, onions, fennel bulb, winter squash, and even cauliflower and brussels sprouts.

First, preheat your oven to 425°. Depending on the hardness of the vegetable, you’ll want to cut them according to how long they need to cook. For example, cut carrots and parsnips thin and potato a bit thicker. Apples will not take as long as squash.

You can cut your veggies into chunks or slices. Spread them out on a large cookie sheet with sides. Drizzle with oil (I like extra virgin but you can use whatever you prefer), and toss to coat.

Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place in oven for about 40 minutes, flipping around about half way through, or till browned around the edges. Test doneness with a fork. Remove the cooked pieces to a serving dish and cover with foil to keep warm. Return any undone pieces to the oven for another 5 to 10 minutes or till done. Serve as a side dish with anything. A drizzle of lemon juice and cracked pepper makes it even more yummy. Honey mustard dressing tastes great on this, too.

I added two bonus recipes on my blog last time—basic crepes and basic brown butter sauce—so be sure to [log on](#) to get them