



**Make Slow-Cooker Oatmeal for an Easy Morning Routine**

It would be an apt description to call my husband a "musher" even though he has never trained, led or raced a dog team of huskies. Simply put, he likes to wake up in the morning to a hot pot of coffee and prepare a big, steaming bowl of homemade oatmeal, or what our family has called it for generations - "mush."

He makes the "mush" by dumping a cup of steel-cut oatmeal that we buy for only 25 cents per cup in bulk at our neighborhood store into a cooking pot on the stove. He adds water, raisins, and chopped fresh fruit such as an apple or a pear, then tosses in a pinch of salt and cinnamon. It's ready to eat in about 30 minutes, just as he opens the sports section of the morning paper.

His has been a fine and dandy routine for years until he recently started a new job as an assistant superintendent of a school that starts in the wee hours of the morning and is located on the opposite end of town from our home. The new early wake-up call prompted a happy discovery: slow-cooker oatmeal. Now he tosses the ingredients in our slow cooker the night before and sets it on low so that the healthy "mush" is hot and ready to enjoy the moment he wakes up. It's a "musher's" dream come true!

If your family knows and likes their oats, give this easy and super cheap version a try. For about 4 servings, you'll need:

- ◆ 1 cup steel-cut oats (not quick-cooking or instant oats)
- ◆ 3 cups water
- ◆ A pinch of salt
- ◆ Dried fruit to taste such as apricots, raisins and cranberries
- ◆ 1/2 cup chopped fresh fruit such as an apple or a pear
- ◆ Cinnamon to taste (optional)

*Here's the fun:* Let your kids measure and pour ingredients in the slow cooker before they go to bed. Stir, cover and set cooker at low heat. In the morning, stir and serve. Vary toppings from day to day such as brown sugar, cinnamon sugar, honey, nuts or chopped banana. Add milk if you wish.

**ALTERNATIVE IDEA**

Try this recipe with your rice cooker if it has a porridge or cereal function that cooks oatmeal. Place ingredients in a bowl and refrigerate the night before. Pour contents into the cooker in the morning, then turn it on. It will cook on its own for about 25 minutes while the family gets dressed.



by Freddy Groves

**A big thumbs-up to the VAOIG**

A recent report says that during this year's multi-agency health care fraud takedown, they've nailed 324 criminals to the tune of \$14.6 billion.

That's "billion" with a "b." And that dollar amount is over double what they've seized before. This time they also seized cars and cryptocurrency. They stopped \$4 billion in fraudulent claims payments. They stopped millions from going overseas to foreign banks. And those weren't just street-thug-level criminals they nabbed. These were bigger guys, including 96 doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other medical professionals. Scammers included foreigners sent here to pull off schemes that used stolen identities of Americans.

Working with several other agencies, all the way from federal level (including the IRS, Homeland Security, the Department of La-

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bor and more) down to local law enforcement, the OIG has brought charges to keep thieves from stealing money from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Here are a few examples of the lowlives they corralled.**

One group was shipping out medical equipment that wasn't really necessary and then billing for it. Working with a marketing company, they pressured recipients to receive and keep the equipment, even if it wasn't needed. Scammers even pressured doctors to sign the orders by repeatedly faxing them documents claiming that the patient had specifically requested the equipment. Eventually the doctor would sign the forms. This scam was good

for a cool \$39 million.

And there was the wound care scam - where wound patches were applied to vulnerable patients who should not have had them - that netted \$600 million.

Then there was the massage therapist who billed over \$2 million for services never rendered. For example, they billed for aquatic therapy when they had no pool, for wheelchair therapy for veterans not in a wheelchair and for pacemaker monitoring for veterans who did not have a pacemaker.

Once again I'm hoping the VA's Office of Inspector General has seen their operating budget increased so they can do even more of what they've been doing.

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