

Internet Resources for Dutch Oven Cooking:

ARTICLES - Go to any web browser and do a search for dutch oven cooking, dutch oven cooking videos, dutch oven care, dutch oven recipes, etc.

Examples – Various Sources

http://pioneer.utah.gov/research/utah_symbols/documents/DutchOvenCooking.pdf

http://www.cowboyshowcase.com/dutch_oven_cooking.htm

<http://www.dutchovenet.com>

<http://www.dutchovendude.com>

<http://scoutingmagazine.org/2009/09/dutch-treats-dutch-oven-101/>

http://www.usscouts.org/cooking/cook_05.asp

http://usscouts.org/cooking/DUTCH_LH.pdf

<http://insects.tamu.edu/people/faculty/dutchoven.html>

<http://www.idos.com/> (International Dutch Oven Society)

VIDEOS - Go to YouTube and do a search for dutch oven cooking

Examples - Three videos from Texas Parks and Wildlife

Part 1 - Intro - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2iG4aMKBCQ>

Part 2 – Basic Meals – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfYQACZ8I8g>

Part 3 – Gourmet Meals - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skZleiGin6k>

Dutch Oven Temperature Control

Controlling the temperature of your Dutch oven when camp cooking or cooking in the outdoors takes a bit of trial and error to master. There are quite a few variables involved including ambient temperature, altitude, humidity and wind as well as the fuel you use. The aspiring outdoor chef will find it to be as much of an art as it is a science. Fortunately you will get the hang of it pretty quickly once you learn a couple of basic concepts. The information provided on the tabs below should provide you with a pretty solid understanding of what you need to know to get started.

- **Temperature Control Basics**
- **Charcoal Placement**
- **Weather**
- **Helpful Tips & Tricks**

For the beginner, it is easy to start with two basic rules of thumb, "The Rule of Three" and "Double up". Both are used with charcoal briquettes as the heat source and both provide the same result temperature-wise. The rule you use depends upon what type of cooking you are doing.

The Rule of Three



For baking you want to have more heat coming from above. In order to get 325 degrees F for 30 to 40 minutes, take the diameter of your oven and add three to determine the number of coals to place on top of your oven. Subtract three to determine the number of coals to place beneath your oven. Place your coals in an evenly spaced checkerboard pattern to obtain even heat.

Tip: For stews, chilies, etc. you will want more heat coming from the bottom so just reverse the Rule of Three (oven diameter -3 on top, +3 underneath for 325 degrees).

Double Up

For roasting you want to have even heat from both top and bottom. To get 325 degrees F for 30 to 40 minutes use a number of coals that is double the diameter of your Dutch oven. Place an equal number of coals in an evenly spaced checkerboard pattern on top of and beneath your oven to obtain even heat.

Frying

When Frying foods in your Dutch oven you will obviously want to have all of the heat coming from the bottom. This also applies when using the lid of your oven as a griddle. To do this, support the upside-down lid of your oven with a couple of bricks or flat stones. Place your coals under the lid and you have a griddle that is ideal for making pancakes or fried eggs. I'll have mine over medium thank you!

Deep Frying

Its great to have freshly made donuts on a camp out. Unfortunately deep frying can be dangerous - especially around open flame. For safety sake, please leave deep frying of food to adults as this is not a technique younger Dutch oven chefs should be using.

A Note on Charcoal

For temperatures other then 325 degrees you will obviously need to add or subtract briquettes. I typically add two charcoal briquettes for each 25 degrees of temperature needed. Also, these methods are based upon the use of regular charcoal briquettes. Do not use Match Light Charcoal for Dutch oven cooking. Match light briquettes are soaked with lighter fluid which cause them to burn hotter and faster then does conventional charcoal.

Basic Dutch Oven Cooking Accessories

You are just getting started with Dutch oven cooking. You have your first Dutch oven but what else is needed? While there are certainly quite a few things that you can use, keep in mind that whatever you plan on using also needs to be stored and transported. When getting started, it is best to stick to just the basic needs, tools and accessories. From there, you can grow your equipment list to match your own cooking style. Below are a few of the basics that you will need to get started.

Charcoal Chimney

You're getting ready to cook some great food. Why douse your charcoal with a petroleum-based lighter fluid when you don't have to? Charcoal chimneys are the best way for starting both natural charcoal and charcoal briquettes. Simply fill the chimney with charcoal and place a few balled up sheets of newspaper in the bottom. Light the newspaper and you will have charcoal ready for cooking within 15 to 20 minutes.

Square Ended Shovel

Use a square ended shovel to pull hot coals out of the fire and spread in a small area the size of your dutch oven. You cannot set the dutch oven on top of coals in the fire. It is too hot.

Charcoal Tongs

Use a simple pair of metal tongs for placing and arranging charcoal briquettes under and on a Dutch oven. Tongs can be bought at your local store or made from heavy gauge wire.

High Temperature Gloves

A pair of high temperature gloves will really help to avoid burns when shuffling hot Dutch ovens and lids around.

Lid Lifter

There are a wide variety of lid lifters available ranging from plier-like tools to long handled gripping devices. All work quite well.

Back Packers or Trivets (Oven Racks)

Some styles of cooking (baking breads, pies, etc.) require that the food be lifted off of the bottom of the Dutch oven to avoid being burned. You don't need to spend a lot of money on bake packers or heavy cast iron trivets. A rolled up coil of foil or a few waded up balls of foil work great. Inexpensive wire trivets available from most department stores work very well.

Lid Stand

Lid stands are a necessity if you don't want to have anything sticking to the inside of your lid or to keep the hot lid from damaging a table or counter. It doesn't have to be fancy – you can even use a trivet.

Wisk Broom

Wisk brooms are helpful when dinner is ready so that one may brush the ashes off of the Dutch oven lids. It sure beats ashes in the food!

Wind Screen

Wind screens become a real necessity when cooking in the outdoors. Winds carry away your heat requiring the use of more charcoal. Wind screens are simple to make or can be purchased.

Oven Stand (A luxury, not a necessity)

Dutch oven stands are useful for keeping Dutch ovens and burning charcoal off of the ground. Stands are available in many different shapes and sizes but are usually used with a single oven or stack of ovens.

Oven Table (A luxury, not a necessity)

For larger Dutch oven meals a Dutch oven table is a must have. Most tables will handle either two or three ovens abreast and one can always stack the ovens to get maximum use out of the table. Tables are available with various leg lengths. It is a good idea to use short legged tables if equipping for younger cooks.

How to Care for Dutch Ovens

- [Dutch Oven Cleaning & Care](#)
- [Dutch Oven Seasoning](#)
- [Top 10 Storage Tips](#)

Dutch Oven Care

Proper cleaning and care of your Dutch oven will allow you to enjoy years of use. Over time, properly cared for Dutch ovens will develop a natural non-stick surface. There are two simple steps to perform before putting your oven away, cleaning and oiling.

Cleaning

Cleaning your Dutch oven, especially a properly cared for oven, should not be difficult. Remove any large pieces of food that are left and wipe out any loose particles. With the oven warm (it opens the pores of the metal), pour a little hot water into the oven - do not use soap. Using a stiff nylon brush or plastic scrubber clean out any stuck-on bits. Do not use any metal cleaning tools or scrapers as metal will harm the finish and may gouge your oven. Wipe out your oven with a cleaning cloth, rinse and dry the oven. If you have some stubborn stuff stuck to the oven try scouring with a paste of table salt and water. The abrasiveness of the salt will help to remove the stuck-on grime.

Oiling

Oiling of your Dutch oven helps to maintain the oven's non stick surface and prevents rust. The first step is to heat your cleaned Dutch oven to open the pores of the metal. Once warm to the touch (not hot), wipe the oven inside and out with a vegetable oil (I exclusively use olive oil). Do not use so much oil that it pools up inside your oven, all you want to do is coat the oven. Once oiled, place a couple pieces of cardboard or rolled up tin foil between the oven and lid to allow air to circulate. This helps to prevent rust. You can now put your oven in its bag or storage container, ready to use next time.

The Way NOT to Clean

There are those who believe the way to clean a Dutch oven is by placing it upside down in a fire to burn out the remnants of a meal. You do not want to do this. Sure, fire will clean out a stuck-on mess. It will also remove any non-stick surface or seasoning, replacing it with tars and other fire byproducts. This can't put a good flavor into future meals. Also, this practice can result in over heating of the metal which can damage your Dutch oven. This technique should only be considered as a last ditch effort for a severely fouled Dutch oven. However before you do this, check our [Dutch Oven Restoration](#) page.

Cautionary Note: Be careful not to use cold water on a hot oven and do not place a hot oven or lid onto snow or ice. The temperature difference very well may result in a cracked oven.

Seasoning Dutch Ovens & Cast Iron Cookware

Dutch ovens, frying pans and other cast iron cookware can now be purchased pre-seasoned from multiple manufacturers. This has greatly reduced the need for us to be seasoning Dutch ovens and other cast iron cookware. However, it is still a good to know how to season Dutch ovens and other cast iron cookware. After all, unseasoned cast iron cookware is still available.

There is also the used market. Occasionally, used cast iron in need of special care can be found at garage sales or flea markets at really good prices. There is also the occasional neglected oven that gets a bit of rust. It doesn't matter if an oven is old or new, Dutch oven seasoning is really a simple process.

The first step is cleaning of the oven. Bare metal ovens fresh from the factory are the only ones that should be cleaned with soap and water. You need to remove any foundry dirt or grime as well as the rust preventative coating that the factory put on the Dutch oven to protect it during shipment. Wash the oven inside and out with hot, soapy water. Once cleaned, rinse the Dutch oven thoroughly and dry. Review the "[Dutch Oven Restoration](#)" link for tips on cleaning or resurrecting neglected or damaged ovens. Once your Dutch oven is thoroughly cleaned you will need to coat it and the lid inside and out with shortening. Take a cookie pan and place it on the grate of your kitchen oven. Place supports on the cookie pan that will hold the Dutch oven upside down and up off of the pan. Place the lid upside down on the feet of your oven. Bake your oven on medium heat (350 deg.) until the oven stops smoking. You can then turn off the heat and let the oven cool. Do not remove your Dutch oven until it has cooled.

Congratulations – you have just seasoned your first Dutch oven! As you see, seasoning is really a pretty simple process. Heating of the Dutch oven opens the pores of the metal allowing the shortening to penetrate the metal. It is then baked into a protective coating, and the beginning of what will be a natural no-stick surface. The process is the same whether you are seasoning cast iron frying pans, muffin pans, skillets, etc.

Top 10 Dutch Oven Storage Tips

1. Never store a wet Dutch oven. A Dutch oven that is put away wet is going to rust.
2. Never store a dirty Dutch oven. A dirty oven will rust and grow mold resulting in a nasty mess.
3. Be sure your oven has been seasoned before storing. Dutch oven seasoning should have been done right after cleaning but be sure to check anyway before storing, especially if someone else cleaned your oven.
4. Be sure your oven has not been over-oiled. There should only be a thin coating of oil, not a pooling of vegetable oil in the bottom of your Dutch oven. Oil pooled in the bottom of an oven will turn rancid and foul your Dutch oven.
5. Store your Dutch oven with the lid ajar to allow airflow. Prop the lid open with pieces of cardboard, rolled up foil or paper towels. This helps prevent rust.
6. Place a perforated baggie of dry raw rice in your oven before storing. The rice will absorb moisture and help prevent rust.
7. Store your Dutch ovens indoors in a clean, dry area.
8. Store in a bag, box or cupboard to keep your Dutch ovens protected.
9. Store on a lower shelf, Dutch ovens can be heavy!
10. If you have multiple Dutch ovens (we're all collectors) be sure to rotate the usage of your ovens. An ignored oven that sits on a shelf for long periods is bound to rust.

Seven secrets of Dutch oven cooking

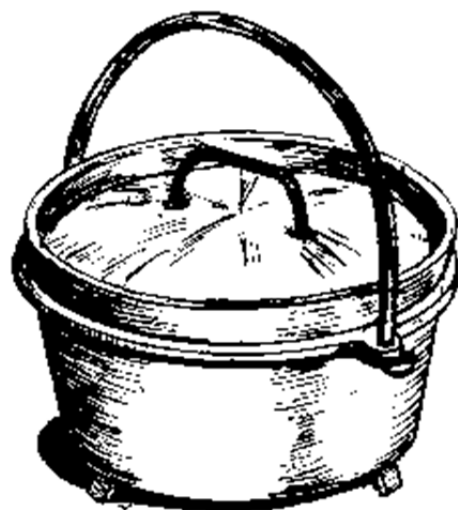
By Roger L. Beattie

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Squatting heavily in dank basements, drafty attics, and dusty, cluttered garages, these three-legged hulks from a bygone era wait impatiently to release their treasures. Until then, they are pitted by time and tarnished by neglect. For those who will uncover the mystery, their gaping caverns can once again be brimming with magic.

From the birth of our nation, Dutch ovens have been an integral and versatile part of Americana. Sadly, today's high-tech hustle-and-bustle lifestyle has all but forgotten the art of "leather-glove cuisine." The coal-black cast iron ovens appear outdated, unfriendly, and forbidding. Interestingly however, with seven simple secrets revealed, the beginning camp cook and the consummate backyard chef can utilize these forgotten friends to produce a marvelous and unforgettable variety of succulent delicacies.

Dutch ovens owned by cooks who understand their subtleties are kept in places of honor, sanctuaries reserved specifically for them. On the other hand, ovens owned by cooks who can't seem to keep the potatoes from burning to the bottom or who can never get the chicken to look anything but a pasty white, are quickly relegated to some obscure location where they will be "out of the way." For the unsuccessful current user, the interested but uninitiated, or anyone who just wants to cook better, the seven secrets outlined below will provide a firm foundation for the creation and consumption of mouth-watering Dutch oven meals fit for even the most discriminating palates.



Secret 1: Choosing wisely

When deciding on a Dutch oven, there are a few important guidelines to keep in mind. A common question is, "Should I buy cast iron or aluminum?" Both have some advantages. Aluminum Dutch ovens weigh about one-third less than their cast iron counterparts. They require no curing, and, like the cast iron pots, can be used over open fires, buried underground, or used with coals or briquettes. However, aluminum Dutch ovens do not retain heat as well nor distribute it as evenly as cast iron. The flavoring of foods produced will also be different. Aluminum ovens sometimes give a chalky flavor to foods, whereas iron ovens give a smoked flavor to foods. Most Dutch oven aficionados use only cast iron ovens.

When buying a cast iron Dutch oven, whether new or used, look carefully at these five important areas:

1. Only buy Dutch ovens with legs. Some are manufactured with flat bottoms and are far more difficult to use. The three legs should be cleanly attached to the bottom of the oven, never cracked, bent, or broken off.

2. Check the fit of the lid. It should lie flush with the lip of the oven all the way around, with no significant gaps.

3. Check the casting, or thickness, of the metal, especially around the rim. There will be some inconsistencies. However, areas that are 15% (or more) thicker or thinner than the remaining areas will produce hot or cold spots during cooking and cooling. This variance in thickness will also make the oven much more likely to crack or warp.

4. Make sure the lid has a loop handle, cleanly attached to its center.

5. Check the bail (the wire handle) attached to the oven itself. It should be easily movable and strong enough to use for carrying or hanging a heavy pot full of stew without difficulty.

If these five areas pass inspection, you've got a good Dutch oven.

Another purchase consideration is the size of the oven. Dutch ovens range in size from 8 to 22 inches in diameter. The most commonly used are 10-inch, 12-inch, and 14-inch ovens. The larger ovens hold more if you're cooking for large groups, but they are huge, heavy, and hard to handle. If you only buy one oven to get started, pick a 12-inch. Later you can add a 10-, 14- or additional 12-inch ovens.

Secret 2: The miracle cure

Once you have an oven, it must be cured. This process will keep your oven from rusting and produce an interior coating that will prevent food from sticking. The process is very simple. If you have an old rusty oven, scrub it well and use a fine-grade sandpaper to clean up and expose the entire surface, inside and out. Once the metal is exposed—or if you are curing a new oven—wash the entire oven well with hot soapy water. This will remove the waxy coating from a new oven and the fine metal dust remaining in an old reconditioned one.

Next, heat your Dutch oven, with the lid on, to about 200° in the oven in your home. (You can also do this in a fire, with coals or briquettes.) While the oven is hot, pour or drop in a small amount of oil, shortening, or lard, and while wearing oven mitts or heavy leather gloves, use a clean cotton cloth to wipe the entire surface well, inside and out, to coat it with the shortening, oil, or lard. When the oven is coated, heat it to 350° for an hour. If you do this in your house, expect some smoke. After an hour of heating, let the oven cool slowly. Force-cooling a cast iron oven by putting it in a freezer, snow bank, or outside during a cold rain, can crack or warp it.

Once you have your oven cured, it is ready for cooking. However, after each subsequent use and cleaning, you maintain and strengthen the cure by wiping a very light coat of oil, shortening, or lard over the dry, warm oven.

The proper cleaning of a Dutch oven is a favorite topic of many cast iron cooks. Some say that excess food must be burned off by turning the oven over in a fire, or by putting the lid on and heating the oven until the food residue inside is burned to a black crust or dust (like a self-cleaning household oven). Others claim it is a mortal sin to use any kind of soap when cleaning Dutch ovens. All, however, agree that you never scrape or scour a Dutch oven. Using metal utensils or wire scrubbers or brushes can remove the curing and allow food to stick in the exposed areas unless the oven is re-cured.

Most frequent Dutch oven users have found that wiping out excess food with a paper towel, then washing the pot with hot soapy water and a sponge will produce a clean and sanitary oven. Remember, after cleaning, be sure to dry the oven completely, then wipe a light coat of your chosen oil over the entire surface of your oven, inside and out, legs included, using a paper towel or cotton cloth. Soon your oven will have a beautiful dark brown or black coat that will be amazingly easy to keep clean.



If you use too much oil while curing or after cleaning your oven, it will become apparent the next time you use it. Each time you take out the oven, remove the lid and smell the inside. If it smells a little rancid, you used too much oil, but don't worry. Just heat up the oven on your stove or over a fire to allow the oil to melt down and puddle in the bottom of the pot. Wipe out the old oil with a paper towel and you're ready to go. There is no need to clean the oven again before using.

Secret 3: Power tools

You will need all the usual utensils required for cooking, such as spoons, forks, spatulas, etc. However, when you pick utensils to use with your Dutch ovens, choose items made of wood, plastic, or Teflon. Metal utensils tend to scrape off the curing when hungry eaters try to dig the last bite of food out of the oven. If areas do get scraped to the bare metal of the oven, you'll need to re-cure it.

In addition to the utensils you are familiar with, there are other tools unique to Dutch ovens which will make your efforts safer, easier, and more successful.

1. You will need a pair of loose-fitting leather gloves long enough to cover your wrists. When leather gloves get hot, loose ones can be flipped off easily and quickly. Tight hot gloves will stick and burn you. Some people prefer welding gloves (gauntlets), but any good thick leather gloves should do fine. Wear these gloves when working with your ovens. They will prevent numerous painful burns, dropped ovens, and ruined meals.

2. Another tool you will need is a lid lifter. There are a number of lid lifter designs to choose from. The most typical is a wire-handled hook. Many of these hooks have a small bar welded horizontally a short distance up the handle from the curve. This is to keep the lid from tilting from side to side while being lifted. Hook lifters can be very ornate or simple hay-hook-like designs. Probably the surest lid lifter is a more recent design which combines the hook with a three-legged brace. The three legs fit flush against the top of the lid, and the hook goes down the middle of the legs and under the lid handle. With this type of lifter, the hook is pulled up to tighten the lid against the three legs of the brace. This design is steady and excellent for keeping coals and ashes on the lid from accidentally becoming additional garnish for the dish being prepared.

3. Lid holders are also a necessity. This tool may be anything from a clean brick to a three- or four-legged wire rack. It is used to keep hot lids off tables and counter tops or out of the dirt when the cook is adding spices or checking the progress of meals cooking.

4. Long-handled tongs are an invaluable addition to your Dutch oven tools. Even a cheap stainless steel pair will last indefinitely. Tongs are used to place, add, or remove coals as necessary. Attempting to position coals with sticks, pliers, etc., often results in poor placement, burned hands, and generally miserable experiences.

5. A small shovel is also important. This small tool, a garden shovel or fireplace shovel, is used for moving coals from a fire, digging a long-cook pit, or burying excess extinguished charcoal.

6. The last special tool you will want to consider is a whisk broom. The broom is used to brush the dirt, ashes, etc., off the lid and side of your oven in preparation for serving. This makes the possibility of ash-flavored beans remote and cleans up the ovens nicely to prevent carrying dirt or charcoal into your camper, cabin, tent, or kitchen.

Secret 4: A fire in the belly

Here's a secret that even most seasoned outdoor cooks don't know: You can prevent burned bottoms, raw tops, and dried-out foods by using properly sized and spaced coals to control the interior oven temperature. Virtually all baked goods can be baked successfully at 350°, which is the ideal temperature for a Dutch oven. To establish and maintain this temperature, the first thing to remember is to use coals from a fire that are roughly the same size as charcoal briquettes.

Or, for more consistency, use briquettes. Charcoal briquettes will burn longer and more evenly than coals from a fire. Use the best briquettes you can afford. There is a difference in quality, and the more expensive brands are generally worth the additional cost.

The number and placement of the coals on and under your oven is critical. The optimal number of coals used for any oven is based on its diameter. For example, if you are using a 12-inch oven, you will need two coals per inch, a total of 24. More coals will likely burn your food and less may necessitate too long a cooking period. To determine how many coals go under and how many go on top, remember the magic number 2:

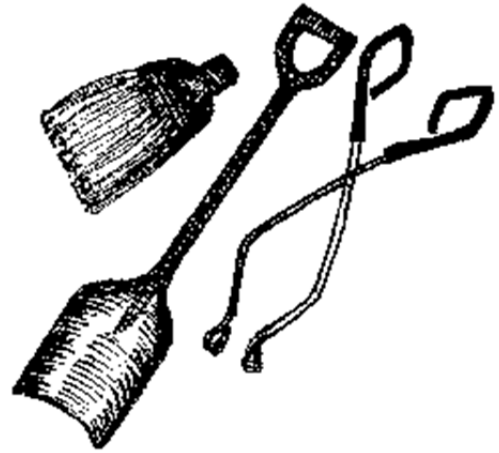
- 2 coals per inch of oven diameter
- place 2 more coals than the oven size on the lid, and
- place 2 less than the oven size under it.

Example: For a 12-inch oven, $12 - 2 = 10$ coals under the oven, and $12 + 2 = 14$ coals go on the lid, for a total of 24. The same formula applies to all ovens. A 10-inch oven should have 8 coals underneath and 12 coals on the lid. A 14-inch oven should have 12 coals underneath and 16 coals on the lid.

The placement of the coals is also an important part of proper heat regulation. The proper layout for coals or briquettes under the oven is circular. Coals should be approximately one inch apart in a circle under the oven. Never place coals directly under the center of the oven. If you do, you will create a hot spot and burn whatever you are cooking. By placing the coals in a circle, the natural conductivity of the oven will distribute the heat evenly and effectively.

The coals on the lid of the oven should also be placed evenly in a circle along the flange of the outer lid. However, four of the coals should be placed toward the center of the lid, two on either side of the handle. This coal placement will produce an even, consistent temperature within the oven of approximately 350° and maintain that heat for up to two hours.

In the event that you need to generate a higher temperature inside your oven, “cheat up” the coals. Additional coals placed two at a time, one on the lid and one under the oven, will add another 50°. Two additional coals top and bottom would bring your oven's temperature up to 450°. It is extremely rare to need a temperature of 450°, and you should never need one higher than that.



Secret 5: A cut above

Meats prepared in a Dutch oven are delectable. They have a flavor and aroma you will never duplicate using any other cooking method. While the taste is always exquisite, some Dutch oven users have difficulty producing a visually appealing meat from inside the steamy oven. The secret is simple: regardless of the spice and flavorings you use on any meat or poultry, always brown the meat first.

To brown the meat, place some oil, bacon, or any fatty item in the hot oven to produce a good covering of oil on the bottom, heat the oven, then put the meat you want to cook in the oven and sear or brown it well. This will seal in natural juices and provide the outer texture and color more typical of grilled or fried meats. Once the meat is well browned on all sides, drain off any leftover fat drippings, add whatever seasonings you like, put on the lid, and cook the meat for 30 to 35 minutes per pound of beef, pork, or lamb, or 25 to 30 minutes per pound of poultry.

Secret 6: Garden pride

Garden vegetables are a magnificent addition to any Dutch oven dinner. Most Dutch oven vegetables are prepared in a sauce of some type, but they may be steamed or boiled as you would on a traditional stove. However, if you choose to bake or roast Dutch oven vegetables, they should cook for approximately three minutes per inch of oven diameter. A 10-inch oven full of squash should cook for about 30 minutes, a 12-inch oven full for 36 minutes. Vegetables to be cooked in sauces, such as sour cream potatoes, broccoli in cheese sauce, or new peas and potatoes in white sauce, should be brought to a rapid boil first, the water discarded, the sauces added, then baked for the proper time noted for other vegetables.

Secret 7: If you knead the dough

Good Dutch oven breads seem to be a rarity. However, marvelous corn breads, biscuits, rolls, and sourdough loaves are surprisingly easy to perfect in the old black pot. The larger the oven the better when it comes to cooking breads. A 14-inch oven serves nicely to produce three loaves of bread or up to three dozen rolls or biscuits. To successfully brown breads, however, you must alter the cooking process for the last five to eight minutes of the traditional 25-30 minute, 350° baking time.

First, put a light coat of oil on the interior of a cool oven (including the lid), and let the rolls or bread complete their final rise in the oven prior to applying the coals. Second, place the oven on the coals with the proper number of coals on top as noted earlier. (Remember: no coals directly under the center of the oven.) Third, when there are five to eight minutes left in the cooking time, lift the lid, lightly brush the tops of the breads with butter, replace the lid, then take all the coals from under the oven and distribute them evenly on the top. With all the heat now on the lid, check the bread every couple of minutes until you think it looks perfect. After brushing the coals and ashes from the lid, remove it, tilt the oven over a bread board, and your perfect bread will gently fall out.

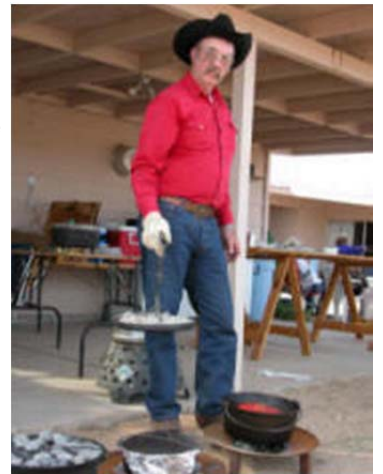
Now that you know the seven secrets, here is a trio of fabulous tried-and-true recipes you can easily make with your old, new, or reincarnated Dutch oven.

Dutch Oven Cooking with Floyd Crandall

- [Controlling the Heat](#)
- [Cooking Meat](#)
- [Easy Bean Dish](#)
- [Making Biscuits](#)
- [Dump Cake](#)
- [How to season cast iron utensils](#)

In the world of big wagon cattle outfits, a cook was hired more for his ability to drive a chuck wagon pulled by a team of draft horses more than for his cooking skills. Chances are that when he cooked, he used "Dutch ovens." These were cast-iron pots with lids that came in various sizes and could be used over an open fire. They were non-breakable and easy to transport.

Floyd Crandall is a rancher, mule man, and Dutch oven cook from Fairfield, Idaho who has perfected the art of Dutch oven cooking. Floyd believes, "You do not need to be a teamster and wagon cook to become a successful Dutch oven cook. With today's new mixes, packaged food that are easy to fix, a very basic set of ovens, and a few accessories, anyone can cook with Dutch ovens." He has shared with us some of his simple methods that can be used in your backcountry camp or on your patio at home.



Techniques, Tips, and Recipes by Floyd Crandall

How to control the heat. I think the first thing a person should learn about Dutch oven cooking is how to control the heat. Most of the cooking is done on the top of oven. As a general rule, you should have twice as much heat on the top of the oven as you do on the bottom. That is easy if you are using charcoal. You can simply count them. If you are using coals from a fire, it depends on what kind of wood you are using and hard woods seem to work the best. You just have try some and see what works the best. Any wood will work ,but you will find that some is surely better. I use only Kingsford charcoal because it is always the same. When I cook in the mountains of Idaho I use either aspen or fir. In the southwest cedar or mesquite seem to work well.

What Shall We Cook?

Now that we know how to control the heat, let's cook a real meal that will satisfy almost everyone .

Cooking Meat

I like to use the best cuts of meat, such as a sirloin roast, because there is no waste and, in case there is any left over, it can be used later in many ways. One half package of dry onion soup mix rubbed on the meat before it is cooked will be all the seasoning that is needed. For a big roast -10 lbs or so- use a whole package. Add a cup of water to your Dutch oven and begin to cook your roast with 8 charcoals on the bottom and 12 on the top. Be sure and not let the oven cook dry. Add a little water as needed .This is hotter than you would cook biscuits but it works. After about an hour, you will need to add a few new charcoals and now would be a good time to add a couple stalks of celery, two big onions and fill the rest of the oven with carrots and potatoes in what ever proportions you like. If you get the oven too full put a piece of foil over the top



.Remember, if you cook the potatoes too long they will be mushy. Continue to cook about one more hour or until the potatoes are done. You will have gained lots of juice by now and that can be thickened with a little flour or corn starch to make gravy.

If you are in a place where you can do it, the very best way to cook meat is to bury it in the ground . To do this, you prepare your meat and vegetables the same way and dig a hole 2 feet deep and 2 feet across. Fill the hole with wood cut into small pieces and add the same amount of wood above ground and then burn the wood until it is reduced to red hot coals. Separate the coals and after putting a piece of foil over the oven to help keep the dirt off, place the oven down in the coals making sure to get some on all sides, underneath, and lots on top. Cover the oven with the handle straight up and add enough moist dirt to completely cover the fire. If you can see any smoke, add more dirt. It will take about 6 hours for this to cook. The good thing about cooking this way is you can dig this up in 6 or 8 hours and it will be done to satisfy your hungry party, without being over cooked.



A **turkey** also works well to either cook with charcoal or bury in the ground .I just season the turkey with a little season-all type salt and cook with 12 coals on top and 8 underneath. A 12 pound bird cooks in about 2 hours. Buried in the ground, it really doesn't matter what it weighs, a turkey will be done in 4 or 5 hours.

Easy Bean Dish: To complement almost any meat dish, I like to use a very easy bean dish .Take 2 cans of pork and beans, 1 can of kidney beans, 1 can of garbanzo beans, 1 can of lima beans or what ever other beans you like, and mix them together after draining the juice off all but the pork and beans. To this, add a mixture of 3/4 cup of ketchup, 1 Tbsp. of mustard, 1/2 cup brown sugar ,1 Tbsp. molasses and 1 Tbsp. vinegar. Brown 1/2 chopped onion and little bacon and add to the mixture. Heat this up slowly as you cook your meat.



Now let's make some biscuits. I simply take some Bisquick and mix it up with enough water to make a dough that I can spoon out in biscuit size amounts. (This will take a little practice.) I usually put 16 or so biscuits in a 12 inch oven. This size oven is good for biscuits. Each biscuit must be rolled in oil (that's what makes them brown), so add enough oil to your oven to very lightly coat each one as you add them to the oven. Don't worry about their being round. It won't matter. Just crowd them to use up your dough. Now we are ready to add heat. I'm usually in a hurry, so I start with 8 charcoals on the bottom and 12 or so on top. When the biscuits have raised and begin to look like biscuits, reduce the heat on the bottom by two charcoals and cook until the sides begin to pull away from the side of the oven. You will see, as they pull away, that they are also beginning to brown around the edges. When this happens, remove the bottom heat and continue to cook on top until they are as brown and crusty on top as you like them to be . The biscuits will take about 30 minutes. They are very easy to do; always a big hit at your cookout.

Dump Cake: Now to go along with your biscuits, roast beef, vegetables and beans, I like to make some kind of cake. There are many kinds you can use , Some of my favorites are:

- chocolate cake over cherry pie filling
- spice cake over peaches
- spice cake over apples

To make your cake, use packaged cake mix and either canned or fresh sweetened fruit or canned pie filling. Begin by putting the fruit in the bottom of the Dutch oven and sprinkle the dry cake mix over the top of the fruit. Pour enough 7up (or other lemon lime soda) over the top to moisten the mix a little [about 1/2 can]



and poke it around some to begin. Six coals on the bottom and twelve on top should be about right to cook this in 45 minutes or so. As it begins to cook, you will see the moisture begin to come up through the cake mix. If you end up with some dry spots add a little more 7up. You will end up with more of a cobbler than a cake, but very few leftovers. Any time you cook sugar it will probably stick to your Dutch oven. Foil lining the oven will somewhat prevent this, but the foil is more trouble than good, so to clean your oven after cooking anything sticky, just boil it out.



Floyd packing with his mules in Idaho



Dawn & Floyd

How to season a Dutch oven

Cast-iron cooking utensils, especially new ones, can stick and give a metallic flavor to foods prepared in them if they are not properly seasoned. Floyd calls this seasoning process "sweetening."

Here is an **unusual but very successful seasoning method** used by the late Harold Nelson, ranch cook Estes Park, Colorado:

Fill the skillet or Dutch oven with water and boil a generous handful of dry hay. The hay can be alfalfa or grass mix. Boil the hay at a rolling boil for about 20-30 minutes. Then you can rinse the utensil, dry it by heating it on the stove, and rub it with cooking oil or spray it with a cooking oil spray (like Pam) and wipe off the excess.

You can also use the water from the boiled hay to sweeten wooden or tin dishes. Soak the dishes for at least 20 minutes.

If you don't have hay available, tea leaves will substitute.

How to restore a badly dirtied or very rusty Dutch oven

If you find a Dutch oven or other cast-iron cookware that has been left very dirty for a long time and will not boil clean, or if you have a Dutch oven that is heavily rusted or blackened you can place it in a wood stove, fireplace, or camp fire until the outer layers of bad material are burned away. The fire is similar to the heat used in cooking and will not melt the metal, but will burn up charred deposits and oxidation. Then season as above.

We have used this method on cast iron vessels that we thought were unsalvageable with **outstanding** results.

I just bought a little Japanese-style cast iron teapot and the instructions said that in the unlikely event of rust, the rust is non-toxic, but if it bothers a person, clean the rusted area with a brush and fill the pot with used tea leaves and boiling water - allow to sit 20 minutes, discard and rinse. It goes on to say the tannic acid in the tea reacts with the rust and forms a natural seal. The tea and hay must react in similar ways. So, if you don't have hay available, tea leaves will substitute.

Most folks say to avoid soap in cleaning seasoned cast-iron cookware, but a little light soap and water will generally not hurt. After cleaning, heat the cast iron on the stove till hot, spray with a bit of Pam cooking spray and wipe off the excess and it will be fine.



Dutch Oven Cooking—Getting Started Guide

By H. Kent Rappleye

Photographs by Pat Haverfield

From the September-October 2009 issue of *Scouting* magazine

A CAMPSITE PRIMER FOR CAST-IRON COOKING.

Welcome to the world of Dutch oven cooking. Whether you've cooked with one for years or just want to try it for the first time, we've designed this column for you. You'll need a Dutch oven and an appreciation for good food.



Dutch ovens come in different sizes and materials, including these 12- and 14-inch cast-iron models and the aluminum oven (top). Crushed newspaper fuels quick-burning charcoal to heat Weber's Rapidfire Chimney Starter (above).

We call lots of pots Dutch ovens. They're the ones with three legs on the bottom, designed to sit above some coals, and have a lid with a rim around the outside edge to keep the coals on top from falling off. They're made with two kinds of material: aluminum or cast iron.

Purists prefer cast-iron ovens. They're heavy and rust if not properly cared for. But they conduct heat more evenly, and, if well seasoned, develop a nonstick surface that rivals Teflon.

Other folks swear by aluminum. They're lighter, don't rust, and require fewer coals. But they can develop hot spots and lose heat faster. And food tends to stick.

I prefer cast iron. I like the taste.

Which Oven Is Right?

The key to choosing a Dutch oven isn't the brand or style. It's whether the lid fits properly. Don't use one that wobbles or is warped. Check the sides of the oven to make sure they're the same thickness all around; uneven walls will result in uneven cooking. Note the surface inside. Is it rough or pock marked? If so, find one that's smooth.

Dutch ovens come in a variety of sizes. Look on the lid for a number that indicates its diameter in inches. A 12-inch oven represents a standard size.



Lifting a hot and heavy oven lid to check on your culinary delight can be tricky, with the risk of coal ash falling into the pot. But welder's gloves and the Mair Dutch Oven Lifter make peeking easy.

These days, most ovens come “pre-seasoned,” meaning the manufacturer has baked onto it a “patina” or nonstick surface. You'll recognize the patina as that rich, black color that reminds you of Grandma's skillet. But if you find an “unseasoned” oven, or one that's rusty, don't fret. Here's a seasoning method that works well:

Start With Seasoning

1. Wash the pot and lid in warm, soapy water—this is the only time you'll use soap in your oven.
2. Rinse well and dry with a paper towel.
3. Thoroughly rub the pot and lid with a thin layer of shortening, lard, olive oil, or cast-iron conditioner. Do not use butter or margarine.

4. Set your outdoor-barbecue grill to medium/high heat (about 400 degrees) and separately place the oven and lid upside down on the wire rack. Close the cover and let the oven bake for an hour. Turn off the grill and allow it and the oven to cool down. You may repeat this entire process if you want a darker patina.

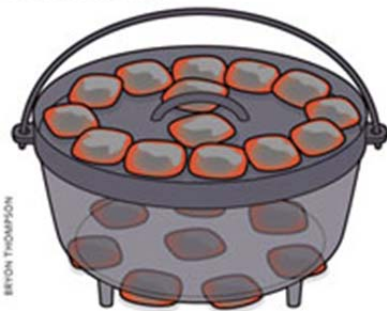
Note: If you're careful, you also can use your kitchen oven for the seasoning process. But you might set off your fire alarm—and your spouse. Place aluminum foil or a cookie sheet on the bottom rack to catch any drips. Bake the Dutch oven at 400 degrees for one hour. Turn off the heat and allow the Dutch oven to cool down as your kitchen oven cools.

The Essentials:

- Dutch oven
- Charcoal briquettes
- Lid lifter
- Charcoal chimney (a metal tube with a handle). Fill chimney with charcoal briquettes. Place a wad of newspaper in the bottom of the chimney and light it, which starts the coals. You can also place the chimney on an outdoor gas stove for faster results.
- Matches or barbecue lighter
- Long tongs for handling hot briquettes
- Heavy leather gloves; welding gloves work great
- Cooking supplies and eating utensils
 - Paper towels, scrapers, and nylon scrub pads for cleaning

**HERE'S HOW TO
TURN UP THE HEAT**

This simple formula will bring your Dutch oven to the correct temperature for baking without fail. It all depends on the number of charcoal briquettes you set on top of the lid and below the oven. Tear out this handy guide for future reference.



12-INCH DUTCH OVEN		
TEMP. °F	TOP	BOTTOM
300°	14	8
325°	15	9
350°	16	10
375°	17	11
400°	18	12
425°	19	13
450°	20	14
500°	21	15

Cooking Made Easy

You can cook anything in a Dutch oven that you can cook in your kitchen oven at home. To avoid serving “burnt offerings,” though, follow the simple “Rule of Three.”

Take the diameter of the oven (12 inches, for example) and subtract three ($12-3=9$) for the number of coals to place below the oven and add three ($12+3=15$) for the number of coals to place on the lid. This creates a temperature of about 325 degrees.

To increase the temperature by 25 degrees, place one coal on top of the oven and one below it (see the accompanying chart). But weather will have an effect. If it's hot, the oven will cook faster; if it's cold, it will cook slower. Wind also dramatically affects the results of Dutch oven cooking.

Also influencing the result: the way you position the charcoal briquettes.

Make a ring of coals about the diameter of the oven's bottom, placing one coal in the center. Set the oven on top of the coals and evenly place coals around the outside edge of the lid, with two coals in the center and one on each side of the handle. Some Dutch oven cooks disagree about placing coals in the center. I prefer it. Experiment and see what works best for you.

Hint: If you can smell your food cooking, you'd better check it regardless of the time suggested by the recipe. It's probably done.

Watch out when you lift the lid to check your food. I've seen many a dish spiced with "camp pepper" (ash) when folks try to lift the lid with a claw hammer, pliers, or some kind of fancy lever. The best lid lifter ever invented is the Mair Dutch Oven Lifter (mairdutchovenlifter.com). It gives you control of the lid like it was your bare hand.

Make Cleanup a Snap

Wipe out the oven with a paper towel. For stubborn foods, use hot water and a nylon "scrubbie" or similar scrub pad (not steel wool) to remove all food from the pot. Or try boiling a few cups of water in the pot with the lid on.

When all food has been cleaned from the oven, wipe it dry and place on a gas stove or other heat source to thoroughly dry out the pores. I wipe a thin layer of cast-iron conditioner, olive oil, etc., on my ovens after I dry them. Some other cooks do not. Just remember: If you keep the oven dry, it won't rust.

Colleen Sloan, one sage of Dutch oven cooking, likes to fill a spray bottle with one part vinegar to four parts water to clean her ovens. She sprays the dirty oven while it's still warm, puts the lid on for a few minutes, and then wipes the oven clean with a paper towel (repeat a few times for really stuck-on foods). I like to use this vinegar/water mix because it neutralizes any odors and disinfects the oven as well.

Some folks line their ovens with aluminum foil or purchase ready-made aluminum inserts to make cleanup easier. Will the aluminum hurt your oven? No. However, it will affect cooking time and evenness of heat, as well as alter the taste. Remember, keep your cast-iron pot well seasoned and cleanup will be a snap.

Store your ovens with the lid off or with a folded paper towel half-in/half-out of the oven with the lid on.

H. Kent Rappleye, the current president of the International Dutch Oven Society, is an Eagle Scout and Vigil Honor member of the Order of the Arrow. A former Scoutmaster, Varsity coach, and commissioner, he has three sons who are Eagle Scouts

Cooking Measurements and useful Conversion Tables

Liquid Measures

Cups	Ounces	Tablespoons	Teaspoons	Milliliters
1/16 c	.5 oz	1 Tbsp	3 tsp	14.786
1/8 c	1 oz	2 Tbsp	6 tsp	29.573
1/4 c	2 oz	4 Tbsp	12 tsp	59.147
1/3 c	3 oz	5 Tbsp	16 tsp	78.783
1/2 c	4 oz	8 Tbsp	24 tsp	118.294
2/3 c	5 oz	11 Tbsp	32 tsp	15.568
3/4 c	6 oz	12 Tbsp	36 tsp	177.441
1 c	8 oz	16 Tbsp	48 tsp	236.589

Cups	Pints	Quarts	Gallons	Liters
1	1/2	1/4	1/16	.236
2	1	1/2	1/8	.473
4	2	1	1/4	.946
8	4	2	1/2	1.892
16	8	4	1	3.785

U.S. & Metric Weight

Ounces	Pounds	Milligrams	Grams	Kilograms
1	1/16	2835	28.35	.028

Temperature Conversion Chart

Dutch Oven Temperatures

Temperature	Fahrenheit	Centigrade
Very Low	250 - 275 deg.	120 - 130 deg.
Low	300 - 325 deg.	150 - 160 deg.
Medium	350 - 375 deg.	180 - 190 deg.
High	400 - 425 deg.	200 - 220 deg.
Hot	450 - 475 deg.	230 - 250 deg.

Meat Cooking Temperature Chart

Internal Meat Temperatures

Roasts or Steaks (Beef, lamb, veal)	Fahrenheit	Centigrade
Medium Rare	150 deg.	65 deg.
Medium	160 deg.	71 deg.
Well Done	170 deg.	77 deg.

Ground (burgers, meat balls, meat loaf, etc.)	165 deg.	74 deg.
Pork		
Medium	160 deg.	71 deg.
Well	170 deg.	77 deg.
Poultry		
Ground, cuts	165 deg.	74 deg.
Whole roasts	170 deg.	77 deg.