

Troop 1
Boy Scouts of America
Hopedale, MA

Dutch Oven Guide



Troop Website:
<http://home.comcast.net/~troop1hopedale/html/home.html>

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Introduction

Care

Cleaning Your Dutch Oven

First, food is removed and second, maintenance of the protective coating. To remove stuck on food, place some warm clean water into the oven and heat until almost boiling. Using a plastic mesh scrubber or coarse sponge and **No Soap**, gently break loose the food and wipe away. After all traces have been removed, rinse with clean warm water. **Soap is not recommended because it will break down the protective covering and will get into the pores of the metal to taint the flavor of your next meal.**

After cleaning and rinsing, allow the oven to air dry. Then heat it over the fire just until it is hot to the touch. Apply a thin coating of oil to both the inside and outside of the oven and the top and underside of the lid. Allow the oven to cool completely. If you do not oil the outside of the oven, then with use, the protective barrier will break down and the oven will start to rust. As a suggestion, it is a good idea to keep a scrubber for cast iron and never use it with soap

Storing Your Ovens

It is important when storing your Dutch ovens to keep the lid cracked so that air can circulate into it. This can be accomplished by laying a paper wick, made from a napkin or paper towel folded accordion style, across the rim of the oven leaving a small amount outside, and then setting the lid down on top of it. The wick also acts to draw any moisture out of the oven. If air cannot circulate into the Dutch oven, the oil used to protect it will turn rancid and will permeate the pores of the metal with a sour odor. **DO NOT** cook anything in a rancid oven, you will not be able to stomach the food! A rancid oven must be stripped of its protective coating and then be re-seasoned again.

A Few Cast Iron No-No's

- **NEVER** allow cast iron to sit in water or allow water to stand in it. It will rust despite a good coating.
- Never use soap on cast iron. The soap will get into the pores of the metal and won't come out very easy, but will return to taint your next meal. If soap is used accidentally, the oven should be re-seasoned, including removal of the present coating.
- Do not place an empty cast iron pan or oven over a hot fire. Aluminum and many other metals can tolerate it better but cast iron will crack or warp, ruining the metal.
- Do not get in a hurry to heat cast iron, you will end up with burnt food or a damaged oven or pan.
- Never put cold liquid into a very hot cast iron pan or oven. They will crack on the spot!

Tips and Techniques

Regulating Oven Cooking Temperature

Briquettes

First and foremost, always use high quality briquettes. Kingsford charcoal is recommended. For recipes that take more than an hour to cook, after an hour remove the remaining briquettes and ash from the oven and replenish them with new briquettes.

Note: because the Dutch oven is already hot, you will not need as many briquettes as when you started cooking.

The general rule of thumb to produce about a 350° heat is to take the size of the Dutch oven in inches, double the number, and use that many total briquettes. So, for a 12" oven you would use 24 briquettes, for a 14" oven you would use 28 briquettes, etc.. **Remember this is just a rule of thumb and does not work for all makes of ovens!**

See Chart in Appendix

Placement of Briquettes

Heat placement around the Dutch oven is crucial to yield the best cooking results. Briquettes placed under the oven should be arranged in a circular pattern no less than 1/2" from the outside edge of the oven. Briquettes placed on the lid should be spread out in a checkerboard pattern. Try to avoid bunching the briquettes as this causes hot spots.

Simmering

For food you wish to simmer such as soups, stews, and chili's; place 1/3 of the total briquettes on the lid and 2/3 under the oven.

Baking

For food you wish to bake such as breads and rolls, biscuits, cakes, pies and cobblers (rising); place 2/3 of the total briquettes on the lid and 1/3 underneath the oven.

Roasting

For food you wish to roast such as meats, poultry, casseroles, quiche, vegetables, and cobblers (non-rising); use an even distribution of briquettes on the lid and underneath the oven.

The golden rule of Dutch oven cooking is "go easy with the heat". If the oven isn't hot enough you can always add more briquettes, but once food is burned, it's burned.

Cooking Tips

Many problems can be avoided by watching your ovens while you are cooking so don't be afraid to lift your oven lids to check on your food. If you see steam escaping from around your oven lids then your ovens are too hot. Dutch ovens act as a sort of pressure cooker steaming the food from the inside out making it more tender. If you let the steam out of your Dutch oven, it doesn't help the food and more often than not the top or bottom will be burned.

To keep from generating hot spots which cause uneven browning and burned spots, rotate your Dutch ovens every 15 minutes by turning the oven 90° in one direction and the lid 90° in the opposite direction. The easiest way to manage this is to lift the lid, rotate the oven 90° clockwise, then put the lid back on so it is facing the same way it was when you lifted it. I usually look at the number cast on the lid when I do this. When rotating the oven properly **the number on the lid should stay in the same place during the whole cooking process.**

A Dutch oven lid can be placed over the fire or stove upside down and used as a skillet or griddle. Using the lid in this fashion, you can make virtually error free pancakes and eggs that don't run all over. This is because most lids are shaped like a very shallow bowl so things naturally stay in the center, even if the lid is not level.

Sources:

Byron's Dutch Oven Cooking Page --- <http://papadutch.home.comcast.net/>

Baking Temperature Chart for Dutch Oven Cooking by Lodge Cast Iron

Oven top/bottom	325°	350°	375°	400°	425°	450°
8"	15	16	17	18	19	20
*****	10/5	11/5	11/6	12/6	13/6	14/6
10"	19	21	23	25	27	29
*****	13/6	14/7	16/7	17/8	18/9	19/10
12"	23	25	27	29	31	33
*****	16/7	17/8	18/9	19/10	21/10	22/11
14"	30	32	34	36	38	40
*****	20/10	21/11	22/12	24/12	25/13	26/14

Servings Per Dutch Oven- These are approximate as some people can eat more than others but they do serve as an aid:

Oven Size	Persons Served
8"	1-2
10"	4-7
12"	12-14
12"deep	16-20
14"	16-20
14"deep	22-28

Baking temperatures taken from regular cookbooks, sometimes refer to Slow, Moderate, Hot, or Very Hot ovens. Those terms normally reflect following temperatures; Slow-250° to 350°; Moderate-350° to 400°; Hot-400° to 450°; Very Hot-450° to 500°.