

Dutch oven and Outdoor Cooking

Anyone can enjoy the challenge of lighting and regulating a fire, preparing food in the outdoors, experimenting with recipes and variations, and inventing new gadgets to help make the outdoor experience a little easier and more like home. To that end, this little collection of ideas has been prepared. Enjoy!

Dutch Ovens

Cast iron pots with close-fitting lids are called Dutch ovens only because similar cookware was used by the early Pennsylvania Dutch settlers in the New World. For centuries, black iron cookware has been used and treasured. The earliest colonists, wilderness explorers, Pioneers, your grandparents and mine have all appreciated the even heating, durability, easy cleaning, and versatility of cast iron. Now we are rediscovering what they knew all along.

Choose a Dutch oven carefully – a good one will be a treasured heirloom. Check the fit of the lid. Look for even casting; the rim should be uniform in thickness all around. The bail handle should move freely and not bind. The inside surfaces should be relatively smooth – not very sandy or rough, but certainly not milled. A quality oven may cost a little more, but the investment will be worth it.

Your new Dutch oven, or any cast iron cookware, needs to be “seasoned” before it is used. This relatively simple process involves water and oil, and should be the first and last time your cookware ever sees soap or detergent.

A light oil coating (a residue from the manufacturing process) usually coats the cast iron. This must be removed, as it is not edible. Thoroughly

wash all surfaces with warm water and soap or detergent, wipe dry with paper towel, and while still warm, rub a light coating of vegetable grease or oil into the surface of the piece, inside and out. Don’t use salted oil or grease; salt will corrode the metal and also cause food to stick.

Place the greased cast iron in a medium-low oven, about 300 degrees F. for an hour or so. Remove from oven and wipe off excess oil. For the first few times you use the new utensil, cook relatively greasy foods such as meats or casseroles, instead of soups and stews. This will help the seasoning to set. From now on, never use soap or detergent on your cast iron.

While still warm, empty out the excess food, wipe clean with a rag or paper towel, and rinse in plain warm water. You can scrub lightly with a plastic scrubber or a rag to coax off any stubborn food particles, but never use any abrasive tool or cleanser.

Allow the cleaned cookware to dry, then rub lightly with oil or grease. If necessary, you can heat the utensil gently on the stove to speed up the drying process and to spread the grease; never let the heat get so high that the grease smokes. Also remember that uneven heating can warp and crack the cast iron, so be careful. Store your Dutch

oven with a paper towel inside it; this will absorb excess humidity and help

prevent rust.

Heat

Many sources of heat can be used with cast iron – natural or LP gas, electricity, wood or charcoal briquette fires. You can use a Dutch oven on top of the stove, in the kitchen oven, or over a campfire. By far the most common heat source is charcoal, either from wood or from charcoal briquettes. Wood is cheap; briquettes are easier to control.

the bottom and the nominal diameter PLUS 3 (or 4) on top. For instance, a 12-inch oven would use about 8-9 coals on bottom, and 15-16 on top, to produce a temperature of 350 degrees F. inside. Each additional coal adds about 25 degrees. Direct sun will increase the temperature, shade will decrease it. A slight breeze will make a hotter fire; high humidity or high altitude will cool it. The following table may help you determine how many charcoal briquettes to use for different size ovens, and for those of you who are math-inclined, the formula may be useful:

Charcoal briquettes are the most common source of heat for Dutch ovens. A good rule of thumb is to subtract 3 (or 4) from the nominal diameter of your Dutch oven. Use that many briquettes on

Quantity of briquettes needed for temperature of 325 degrees F

Oven Size	Top	Bottom
8 inch	11	5
10 inch	13	7
12 inch	15	9
14 inch	17	11
16 inch	19	13

$$\text{Briquettes needed} = \text{Diameter} - (400 - T) / 25 \text{ [bottom]}$$

$$\text{Briquettes needed} = (\text{Diameter} * 1.5) - (400 - T) / 25 \text{ [top]}$$

Where you actually place the coals depends on the kind of food you are cooking, and whether you are stacking ovens. Soups, stews, and casserole dishes require more heat on the bottom; cookies, cakes, breads, pies, and the like need more heat on the top. Meats, potatoes, and vegetable dishes

need more or less even heating top and bottom. The recipe will usually suggest a good starting point, but don't be afraid to experiment.

If you will rotate the oven on the coals, and the lid on the oven, periodically, you will usually avoid

uneven heating and burned or undercooked food. You can check the progress of the cooking as desired. You may increase the cooking time slightly with the resultant cooling of the oven, but that is certainly better than burned food.

A very good, quick way to start a charcoal fire is to use a bucket. Using heavy-duty tin snips or a saber saw, cut the bottom out of a 5-gallon metal bucket (they are hard to find any more, so keep your eyes open). Cut out a “mouse hole” or two, at least the size of a softball, in the bottom edge of the remaining cylinder. About half-way up, attach a wire grid or basket across the diameter of the bucket.

To ignite the charcoal, crumple two or three sheets of newspaper and stuff them in the bottom cavity. Pour the needed number of charcoal briquettes in the top and spread them evenly on the wire grid. Light the newspaper, and in just a few minutes the natural chimney effect of the bucket will have the coals flaming hot.

You can remove the coals one at a time with long handled tongs, or several with a large spoon or small shovel. Be careful about dumping the coals, however; this method of igniting coals is so efficient that the heat above the bucket is VERY intense and can burn through the heaviest leather gloves in no time.

Helpful Equipment and Ideas

Some tools are indispensable, but most can be easily obtained or home made. It is even fun to substitute and improvise tools.

- **Gloves:** heavy leather gloves are necessary for handling hot ovens and accessories, and for working near the heat of the charcoal.
- **Lid hook:** several types are available commercially. A claw hammer works well, too. You can even make your own hook. Use your imagination!
- **Lid rest:** keeps the lid clean when checking food, adding ingredients, stirring, or serving.
- **Tongs or small shovel:** useful for placing burning charcoal on or under oven.
- **Charcoal starter bucket:** fastest and safest way to ignite charcoal briquettes. You can make one as described above, or purchase a charcoal starter chimney from an outdoor supplies store such as Parks Sportsman or Home Depot. I have even seen them at supermarkets like Maceys.
- **Whisk Broom:** use to sweep ashes off the Dutch oven lid before serving food, and to help clean up after the meal.
- **Equipment rack:** a back saver; keeps the pots and pans at a convenient height.
- Try frying on the Dutch oven lid. Support the lid upside-down on three rocks the size of handballs, and arrange charcoal underneath it.

- How about using the Dutch oven upside-down? Put the pot upside-down on the inverted lid and bake biscuits, pizza, etc. You will need extra charcoal on the top of the oven bottom, because of the increased distance to the food.
- Support a pie pan or cake pan on three golf ball-size rocks in the Dutch oven, to more evenly bake a pie or cake.
- Try using a cardboard box lined with aluminum foil for an oven. This works exceptionally well. (You can tape the foil to the box, as long as the tape is not exposed directly to the heat of the charcoal, or for a more durable oven, staple the foil through the box to wood slats that frame the open end.) Support a cake rack or an oven rack on four empty soda-pop cans, place charcoal underneath the rack, on aluminum foil, and invert the foil-lined box over the rack. Support the box on a couple of small rocks or boards to allow the fire to breathe. Remember the rule of thumb for heat: about 25 degrees F for each charcoal briquette; start with about as many briquettes as the width of the box in inches.
- Cook on a spit over an open fire.
- Don't forget to have fire fighting tools, such as a shovel, sand, and bucket of water on hand, just in case of emergency.
- Baby wipes or moist towelettes are totally wonderful and convenient for quick cleanups, both for you and for your small children.

Recipes

You can cook practically anything in a Dutch oven or cardboard box that you can cook in a regular oven, but some recipes just seem to jump up and down and yell,

“Cook ME in a Dutch oven! Cook ME in a Dutch oven! Cook ME in a box!”

Teriyaki Beef

Vicki Crabb

I get the cheapest boneless roast I can find and have it thinly sliced.

Marinade:

- 1 C brown sugar, packed
- ½ C vinegar (wine or rice)
- 1-1/3 C soy sauce
- 1 tsp MSG
- ¼ tsp ginger

Mix ingredients. Combine meat and sauce. Let marinate in zip-lock bag overnight. Dump into Dutch oven and cook until meat is brown – about 20 minutes using 12 briquettes on bottom AND top.

This is so good! My children love it with rice so they can pour the sauce over the rice.

Vera's Baked Beans

Vicki Crabb

½ C catsup
½ lb bacon
16 oz chili sauce
1 lb ground beef
2 T mustard
1 onion
1 green pepper
2 cans (31 oz) pork & beans
½ C brown sugar

Brown bacon and ground beef in 12 inch Dutch oven. Chop onion and green pepper and sauté with meat until tender. Drain excess fat. Add brown sugar, catsup, chili sauce, and mustard. Simmer for 15 minutes. Add beans. Simmer covered for 2 hours. (This tastes good even if it has only simmered for ½ hour.)

Chicken with Crab

Rebecca Moore

2 broiler fryer chickens (about 2-1/2 lbs each) cut in half
1 stick butter, divided in half
½ tsp pepper
1/8 tsp paprika
1 tsp salt
4 slices white bread, cubed
½ C milk
¾ of a 12 oz pkg Krab meat
1 tsp prepared mustard
½ tsp poultry seasoning
½ tsp dried thyme leaves
¼ tsp ground red pepper
1 can (6 oz) sliced mushrooms, drained

Arrange chicken halves, skin side up, in a 14 inch Dutch oven. Dot with 2

T butter. Sprinkle with pepper, paprika, and salt. Bake 30 minutes with 16-20 coals on top, 10-12 on bottom (medium-high heat, approximately 450 degrees F.). Meanwhile, prepare stuffing. In medium bowl, mix bread crumbs and milk until milk is absorbed. Chop Krab meat and place in bowl with bread crumbs. Mix mustard, poultry seasoning, thyme, ground pepper, ¼ tsp salt, remaining butter (melted) and mushrooms. Add to Krab and mix well. reduce Dutch oven temperature by 4-6 coals (375 degrees). Turn chicken over; fill breast cavities with stuffing. Bake 35 minutes longer, until juices run clear when pierced with fork. Baste occasionally with pan drippings. To serve, arrange chicken on Dutch oven lid, garnish with parsley, mushrooms, flowers, etc. Serves 8.

Dutch oven Spuds with Bacon, Cheese, and Onions

Rebecca Moore

10 lbs potatoes, peeled and diced
Cold water
6 large yellow onions, peeled and chopped
1 lb bacon

4 T vegetable oil
Salt and pepper to taste
1-1/4 lbs mild cheddar cheese, grated

Peel and dice potatoes in approximately 1 X ¼ inch pieces. Cover with cold water until ready to use. Peel and chop onions. Cut bacon in 1-inch

pieces. Heat oil in 16-inch Dutch oven. Cook bacon until almost crisp. Add onions. Brown. Add potatoes. Season as desired with salt and pepper. Cover and cook over hot coals, with coals on top until potatoes are almost done. Remove

Dutch oven from coals and sprinkle potatoes with cheese. Replace lid for 5 minutes. Serve piping hot. (If lid is on Dutch oven, these potatoes will stay hot at least 30 minutes.)

Roast Turkey

1 small turkey
1 T pepper
1 tsp sage
1 tsp thyme
1 C water
1 clove garlic
1 onion
1 stalk celery
2-3 pieces bacon

Rinse turkey inside and out. Remove neck and giblets. Mix spices in a bowl and rub mixture on turkey inside

and out. Cut onion and celery into large pieces, with garlic; place inside turkey. Put bacon strips over turkey breast. Add enough water to steam or roast in moist heat. Cook in hot Dutch oven 20 minutes, then reduce heat to moderate (300-325 degrees F) for 15 minutes per pound or until done. Start with 14 coals on top and bottom, then reduce heat to 12 on top and 10 on bottom. This recipe fits in a 14-inch deep Dutch oven. We usually get a turkey breast instead of whole turkey, and fit it into a 12-inch oven. A stuffed bird will take longer to cook.

Pizza

Dough:

1-1/2 C flour
1 T dry yeast
1/2 tsp salt
1 T sugar
1 – 1-1/2 C water
2 T oil

Sauce:

1 can tomato sauce
1 tsp oregano
1/8 tsp garlic powder
1/2 tsp basil
1 tsp Italian seasoning
Pinch of salt

Adjust seasonings to taste, mix well. Makes enough for 2 pizzas.

Dissolve yeast in warm water; add sugar, salt, and oil. Mix in flour to form a rather stiff dough; knead for 5 minutes. Cover and let rest for 10 minutes, then divide in half and press each half into 12-14 inch pizza pan, or 9x13 inch dripper pan. Bake in hot cardboard box oven for about 5 minutes, or until almost brown. Top with sauce and your favorite pizza toppings: pepperoni, sausage, mushrooms, olives, onions, ham, pineapple, Mozzarella cheese. ... whatever. Bake in hot cardboard box oven for 10-15 minutes longer, until cheese is melted and crust is browned.

Marie's Fabulous French Rolls

Rebecca Moore

1-1/2 C water
2 tsp active dry yeast
1 T sugar
1 T salt
2 T butter
4 C flour
2 T melted butter
1 tsp sesame seeds

Heat water in Dutch oven.
Remove 1/2 C at lukewarm stage. Mix yeast and sugar with 1/2 C water and set aside to activate yeast. Add salt and 2 T butter to hot water. In large mixing bowl

combine hot water mixture and 2 C flour. Beat until blended. Add yeast mixture and 1 C flour. Blend. Add more flour if necessary to make a moderately stiff dough. Knead until satiny and well mixed. Cover and let rise 30 minutes. Punch down and form into 12 balls. Dip balls in melted butter and place in lightly buttered Dutch oven. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Cover and allow to rise until double in bulk. Bake at 375 degrees F for 20-30 minutes (6 coals on bottom, 15 on top). Rotate 1/4 turn every 5 minutes. Butter tops of rolls when done, and serve with butter, honey, or jam. Garnish with fresh flowers.

Easy Pineapple Upside-down Cake

1/4 C butter
1/2 C brown sugar
2 cans pineapple chunks (reserve juice)
1 white or yellow cake mix

Prepare cake mix according to package directions, using reserved juice from pineapple instead of water. Melt

butter in Dutch oven. Add brown sugar and pineapple (including remaining juice). Pour cake batter over pineapple. Bake 45-60 minutes, 10 coals on bottom and 12-14 on top. You can substitute pineapple rings and maraschino cherries if desired. I also like pecan halves. The inverted Dutch oven lid makes an ideal serving tray, as long as you balance it on a lid rack or three rocks.

Pie

Any pie or cake can be cooked in a Dutch oven. Place a round cake cooling rack or three golf ball-sized

rocks on the bottom of the oven and put the pie pan on the rack or rocks. Bake with 10-12 coals on bottom and 16-18 on top.

Brownies

2 sticks butter
2 C sugar
1-1/2 C flour
6 T cocoa powder

4 eggs
1C nuts
1 tsp vanilla

Melt butter in 12-inch Dutch oven. In bowl combine flour, sugar,

cocoa, and mix together. Add eggs and vanilla and mix. Stir in butter and nuts. Bake 20 minutes at 350 degrees F, 6-8

coals on bottom and 12-14 on top. Dust with powdered sugar or frost.

Dump Cake

Vicki Crabb

Place canned fruit or pie filing on bottom of Dutch oven. Spread dry cake

mix on fruit. Top generously with brown sugar and butter drops. Bake with 8 coals on bottom and 16 on top for 45 minutes. Serve with ice cream.

Goo.o.o.o.o.d Stuff

Vicki Crabb

2 white cake mixes
1 can cherry pie filling
1 large can apple sauce
1 large box red Jell-o

Pour apple sauce in Dutch oven. Pour in cake mixes, then pie filling. Cover with Jell-o. DO NOT STIR! Bake 45 minutes, 350 degrees F.

Pineapple Chicken

Evelyn McNeff

8 boneless chicken breasts
½ C flour
1-1/2 tsp salt
½ tsp paprika
1/3 C salad oil
1 orange
1 can crushed pineapple
1 C chicken broth
Fresh mint sprigs

Wash and dry chicken breasts. Grate the rind of the orange and squeeze the juice. Drain the juice from the pineapple. Pour the orange and

pineapple juice over the chicken and let stand 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, mix flour, salt, paprika; roll the chicken in the flour mixture. Heat oil in Dutch oven and brown chicken on both sides. Remove juices from Dutch oven and replace chicken.

Sprinkle with grated orange peel and put a teaspoon of crushed pineapple on each piece. Pour chicken broth around chicken and top each chicken breast with mint sprigs. Cook 45 minutes at 350 degrees F. Garnish as desired. Serves 8

Pork Chops and Rice

Carolyn Sander

6 pork chops, boneless
2 C rice
2 tsp salt

2 C chopped onion
4 C water
2 cans cream of mushroom soup
2 T oil

Brown pork chops in oven with onions. Pour rice over and stir well. mix soup, water, and salt. Pour into Dutch

oven. Cover and bake 25-30 minutes, 6-8 coals on bottom and 16-20 on top.

Enchilada Casserole

Dixie Millet

3 lbs lean ground beef
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 large onion, diced

1 can (6 oz) chopped green chilies
2 cans black olives, sliced
4 C grated medium cheddar cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Brown in 12-inch Dutch oven. Remove from heat. In medium bowl, mix the following and set aside:

1 medium can enchilada sauce
1 can (6 oz) tomato sauce
2 tsp chili powder

Dip tortillas into sauce and place in an oiled Dutch oven. Add a layer of meat, cheese, and chilies. Repeat for three layers. Pour remaining sauce over layers and sprinkle the remaining cheese on top.

Now, with the following:
1 dozen tortillas

Bake 45-50 minutes, 7-10 coals on bottom and 14-18 coals on top.

Granny's Prize Apple Dumplings

Evelyn McNeff

9-12 small cooking apples

3 C flour
½ C sugar
½ tsp salt
½ tsp baking powder
1 C butter
2 eggs
2/3 C milk

Filling:

1 C brown sugar
1 T butter
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp vanilla extract
½ C chopped pecans

Sauce:

1-1/2 C brown sugar
2-1/4 tsp cinnamon

3 C water
1-1/2 tsp lemon juice
½ C butter

Core and peel apples, but leave whole.

Make crust by sifting dry ingredients together several times. Add shortening and mix until dough has a consistency of meal. Lightly beat eggs, add milk, and mix. Add egg mixture to dough mix. Stir until well-mixed. Place on floured pastry board and knead.

Break off 2-inch dough balls and roll flat like a pie crust. Place an apple in the center of the crust. Fill apple core hole with filling which has been folded together. Roll apples in cinnamon-sugar. Wrap crust around apple, sealing tight.

Turn sealed side down in 12-inch Dutch oven. Repeat this procedure until

bottom of oven is filled with layer of wrapped apples. Warm sauce to dissolve sugar. Pour warmed sauce over wrapped apples. Sauce should fill oven to about 2/3 of the way up the apples.

Bake 45 minutes, 10 coals on bottom and 14 on top, until golden brown. If crust is browning too fast, remove a few coals from the lid. About 15 minutes before done, place pecan half in each apple dumpling. Serve with sweet cream or ice cream if desired.

Apple Crisp

Carolyn Sander

Filling:

2 large cans apple pie filling
½ chopped nuts

Topping:

1-1/2 C flour
½ rolled oats
¼ tsp salt
½ tsp soda
½ C brown sugar
½ C white sugar
12 T butter

Line 12-inch Dutch oven with aluminum foil.

Pour pie filling into Dutch oven. In a separate container, cut butter into dry ingredients of topping mixture and sprinkle on top of pie filling, then sprinkle the nuts on top.

Cook approximately 1 hour with most of the coals on top and fewer on the bottom of the Dutch oven, until golden brown. Check often to avoid over-browning.

Thanks to Vicki Crabb and Rebecca Moore for sharing their recipes and expertise. Other recipes are from "Dutch Oven Gold" by Val and Marie Cowley, "Cast Iron Cuisine" by Linda Cowley and Geri Munford, from the Food Section of the Daily Herald, July 17, 2001, and from the recipe books and experiments of Irene and Jim Manookin.