

Dutch Oven Basics

Regulating Temperature

Size	Oven Capacity	Persons Served	Coals For Roasting		Coals For Baking		Coals for Stewing	
			Top	Bottom	Top	Bottom	Top	Bottom
8	2 Qrts	1-2	10	6	12	4	4	12
10	4 Qrts	4-7	12	8	15	5	5	15
12	6 Qrts	12-14	14	10	18	6	6	18
14	8 Qrts	16-20	16	12	21	7	7	21

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. I usually remove 2-3 briquettes from the top and bottom the first time I replenish them.

The Golden Rule

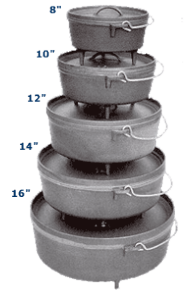
- "Go easy with the heat".
- If the oven isn't hot enough you can always add more briquettes, but once food is burned, it's burned.

Hot Spots

- 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.
- When I lift the lid to rotate my ovens I usually peek inside to see what the food is doing. This way I know if the oven temperature is right or if I need to adjust the number of briquettes.

Stacking

- Stacking your dutch ovens is a great way to save ground space, fuel, and time. The coals on the lid of one oven serve as the 'underneath' coals for the oven stacked on top. And, the oven on top helps trap heat for the oven underneath. All this makes heat estimating more difficult so you should only tackle this after you've got some experience and are willing to practice on a few meals.
- The most important thing to remember is that items needing more heat should be on top. Your bread or dessert should be the bottom-most oven since it wants very little heat underneath. Then, your meat to roast in the middle and a stew on the top.



Seasoning Dutch Ovens

- Cast iron Dutch ovens, if properly cared for, will last for many generations.
 - Constant and proper Dutch oven care beginning from the day the oven is purchased will keep it in service for many years.
 - All quality ovens are shipped with a protective coating that must be removed prior to seasoning.
 - Removing the protective coating requires a good scrubbing with a little soap, some hot water, steel wool, and a little elbow grease.
This is the only time you will ever use soap on your Dutch oven.
 - Once the oven has been cleaned, it should be rinsed well, then towel dried and allowed to air dry.
- I recommend using an outdoor gas barbecue in a well ventilated area.
 - Preheat your barbecue or kitchen oven to 375°. After your Dutch oven is dry, place it on the center rack with the lid ajar.
 - Allow it to warm slowly so it is just barely too hot to handle with bare hands.
 - This preheating does two things, it drives any remaining moisture out of the metal and opens the pores of the metal.
- Now, using a paper towel or a clean 100% cotton rag, apply a thin layer of cooking oil.
 - I prefer using vegetable oil over peanut and olive oils because the burning point of vegetable oil is lower so it will set up and harden at lower temperatures.
 - Tallow or lard can also be used but they tend to break down over time so are not recommended on ovens that will be stored for long periods of time.
- Make sure the oil covers every inch of the oven, inside and out and replace it on the center rack, this time upside down with the lid resting on top of the legs.
 - This will keep oil from pooling in the bottom of the oven.
 - Bake the oven for about an hour or so at 375°.
 - This baking hardens the oil into a protective coating over the metal.
- After baking, allow the Dutch oven to cool slowly.
 - When it is cool enough to handle, apply another thin coating of oil.
 - Repeat the baking and cooling process.
 - When the oven can be handled again apply another thin coating of oil.

- Do not leave any standing oil in the oven!
 - Standing oil can turn rancid ruining the protective coating you just applied.
 - Allow the oven to cool completely.
 - Now it should have three layers of oil, two baked on and one applied when it was warm.
- This seasoning procedure only needs to be done once, unless rust forms or the coating is damaged in storage or use.
 - This baked on coating will darken and eventually turn black with age.
 - This darkening is a sign of a well kept oven and of its use.
- The seasoning's purpose is twofold,
 - First and most important, it forms a barrier between moisture in the air and the surface of the metal.
 - This effectively prevents the metal from rusting.
 - The second purpose is to provide a nonstick coating on the inside of the oven.
 - When properly maintained, this coating is as nonstick as most of the commercially applied coatings.
- **Note:** Avoid cooking anything with a high acid content such as tomatoes, or a lot of sugar such as cobblers for the first 2 or 3 times after seasoning your oven.
 - The acid and sugars can break down the protective covering before it has a chance to harden properly.
- Aluminum Dutch ovens do not require a "seasoning".
 - Most aluminum ovens are shipped with a protective coating and a simple washing with soap and hot water will remove it.
 - Since aluminum doesn't rust, no further protection is required.
 - However, if you season an aluminum oven like you do a cast iron oven, food will not stick in it as often as it would if left untreated.

Cleaning Dutch Ovens

- More often than not, cleaning cast iron Dutch ovens is much easier than scrubbing pots and pans.
- 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.
- For aluminum ovens, the cleaning is the same as for ordinary pots and pans.
 - Use soap and water and scrub them as you would your other pans.








Storing Your Dutch 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.

Cast Iron NO NO's

1. Never, and I repeat, **NEVER** allow cast iron to sit in water or allow water to stand in it.
 - It will rust despite a good coating.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Do not get in a hurry to heat cast iron, you will end up with burnt food or a damaged oven or pan.
5. Never put cold liquid into a very hot cast iron pan or oven.
 - They will crack on the spot!

Tools

	Make sure to have some wooden utensils on hand for stirring your food. Avoid using metal or plastic utensils.		A good pair of leather or welders gloves will prove invaluable around a hot fire..
	A charcoal starter or "chimney" offers a fast way of lighting briquettes without using lighter fluid.		Long handled metal tongs work well for moving and placing briquettes.
	Another item that will prove useful is some sort of lid lifter or hook. A large pair of pliers will also do the job.		Great for scrapping out stuck on food and doesn't damage the Dutch Oven
	Large, heavy duty, metal plate to put coals on and stack Dutch ovens. Needs to be at least 16 to 18 inch in diameter		

