

## NECESSARY GEAR AND GADGETS TO GET YOU STARTED

**LID LIFTER:** This is a must have. It is used for lifting the lid without dumping ash into your food, spinning the lid and lifting / spinning the whole Dutch oven.

**LID STAND:** The lid stand is primarily used to place the lid on while the top of the lid is still loaded with coals. It helps keep the surface of the lid that is closest to your food free of dirt and leaves. It also can be used to support the lid when using it as a griddle by placing the stand in the coals with the lid on the stand upside down.

**CHIMNEY:** Used to ignite charcoal, the chimney has a grate placed horizontally in the cylinder about 1/3 of the way up from the bottom. Charcoal is placed above the grate and three pieces of crumbled newsprint are placed below. The lit newsprint is enough to ignite the charcoal.

**CHARCOAL TONGS:** When using charcoal as the heat source, this tool is a must. It is used to retrieve coals from the chimney and to arrange coals on and under the Dutch oven. Be sure to purchase a pair that is 16 inches or longer.

**LEATHER GLOVES:** Gloves will certainly reduce the battle wounds. Whether it's handling the oven during cooking or afterwards during the clean up process, the gloves make handling items, especially the lid, much easier and safer.

**SCRUB BRUSH:** Used to scrub food debris from the inside of the pot, a scrub brush is a necessary tool for cleaning without damaging the seasoning of the cast iron. The handle allows you to scrub of the surface inside the oven with hot water. Use natural or synthetic fibers. Don't use a wire brush or Brillo type pad.

**SCRAPER:** A plastic scraper is used to remove stuck-on food debris before scrubbing the pot. Especially helpful when cleaning up after a cobbler or stew. Saves a lot of time and wear on the scrub brush.

## WHY DO DUTCH OVENS COME IN SO MANY DIFFERENT SIZES?

Regardless of what the diameter of the Dutch oven, most sizes come in either "regular" or "deep" depth pots. Regular is sometime referred to as "shallow". Regular depth ovens work well for baking cakes and corn breads. Deep ovens are perfect for a whole chicken, roast or one-pot meal. The choice of diameter depends on the volume of food you need to cook. For a group of 6 to 8 people, a 12 inch Dutch oven will likely meet your needs depending on the appetites and whether it is a main course, side dish or dessert. The following are the different sizes of Lodge brand Dutch ovens and their respective volume:

**6 INCH** (*only comes Regular*) holds 1 Quart

**8 INCH** (*only comes Regular*) holds 3 Quarts

**10 INCH REGULAR** holds 4 Quarts

**10 Inch Deep** holds 5 Quarts

**12 Inch Regular** holds 6 Quarts

**12 Inch Deep** holds 8 Quarts

**14 Inch Regular** holds 8 Quarts

**14 Inch Deep** holds 10 Quarts

**16 INCH** (*only comes Regular*) holds 12 Quarts

**Author's Choice** on a great general purpose oven is the 12 inch Deep. The 8 inch and 16 inch Dutch ovens are no longer manufactured by Lodge. **Aluminum Dutch ovens** manufactured by GSI are commonly available 10 inch regular (without legs) and 12 inch deep sizes.

**DO THE SPIN TO PREVENT HOT AND RAW SPOTS!** Each coal creates a focused area of heat. A little periodic rotation of the lid and the pot will even out the heat being supplied to your oven goodies. This is especially important when baking. Every 10 to 15 minutes, using your lid lifter, pick up and spin the pot about a 1/3 rotation in one direction. Then spin the lid a 1/3 rotation in the opposite direction. Keep gentle pressure down on the lid when spinning. Lifting the lid causes heat to escape, which will extend the time required before your food is ready to eat.

# Dutch Oven Cooking



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**What is a Dutch Oven?** The type of Dutch oven used by campers is most often a "camp Dutch Oven" Unlike the Dutch oven used at home in your kitchen, a camp Dutch oven typically has 3 legs that elevate it above the coals that provide heat to the bottom of the oven. A camp oven without legs is elevated using either a lid stand or 3 small rocks. The top of the lid of a camp Dutch oven has a rim. The rim helps prevent the ash and coals from the heat source on top of the oven from falling into the pot and adding an unwanted seasoning to your culinary treat. The lid of the oven also has a center loop. The center loop is used with a lid lifter to both spin and remove the lid. A camp Dutch oven will also have a wire bail looping from one side of the pot to the other to create a handle to lift the camp oven. Camp Dutch ovens have a flat bottom, while the underneath of the lid is either flat or concave. Most camp ovens are cast iron yet ovens that are 1/3 the weight are sometimes available in cast aluminum. Both types work equally well, but the cast aluminum loses heat more quickly, which could be an issue especially in cold and windy conditions. Ovens come in several sizes to accommodate the number of people being served and the type of cooking being performed.

**ANYTHING YOU CAN COOK AT HOME IN YOUR HOUSE-HOLD OVEN, YOU CAN COOK IN A CAMP DUTCH OVEN.**

Actually, that statement can be expanded to include also anything you can cook on your stove at home. From baking cakes, to cooking up a stew, to frying eggs; the camp Dutch oven has you covered. A big improvement is the development of lid lifters that quickly clamp on the lid making maneuvering it far less risky.

**Baking** is performed with heat supplied both on the top and bottom of the oven. When using charcoal as the heat source, the rule of thumb is to take the diameter of the oven and add 2 to determine the number of briquettes to place on the top of the oven. For the bottom, take the diameter of the oven and subtract 2. A 12 inch diameter oven would require 14 briquettes on top of the lid and 10 under the oven. Another option is to space the briquette coals in an even or “checkerboard” pattern below and above the oven, it works just as well and is easier to simply space the top briquettes evenly along the rim of the lid and in a circle of the same diameter as the bottom of the oven. Most baking tasks benefit from pre-heating the oven by adding heat 15 to 20 minutes prior to adding the item to be baked.

**Stews, chilies and most one-pot meals** will rely primarily on bottom heat. Adjust your temperature based on the stage of preparation. When browning the meat as you begin the dish, place the oven on a single layer bed of coals at least the diameter of the oven bottom. Once to the simmering stage, reduce the amount of heat by reducing the volume of coals or delaying replenishing coals as they expire. A little top heat with a ring of coals on top of the lid can also help in simmering, especially in cold weather and full pots. *It's not immoral to consider using your gas*

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**Frying eggs, pancakes and bacon** can be accomplished in one of two different methods. The first method is to use the bottom of the pot as the frying pan. Create the desired amount of heat by the number of coals under the oven. To fry the bacon, start with an even, full bed of coals at least the diameter of the bottom of the oven. You will need a little less heat for frying the eggs and pancakes. Start with half a bed of coals and add more if required to reach the desired temperature. You may be faced with some extra challenges flipping and maneuvering your treats depending on the depth and diameter of your oven. **The lid of the oven can also be used as a frying surface.** Place a lid stand upside down so it's not in the way of the loop on the lid. Arrange your coals evenly and at least the diameter of your lid. With lid upside-down, rest it centered on the lid stand. Depending on the brand of oven, the lid surface will either be slightly concave or flat.

**THE HEAT IS ON!** Although using coals directly from a nice hardwood campfire could be a convenient source of heat, the use of charcoal briquettes provides a source of even heat that is easier to regulate and control. Use a quality charcoal that has not been impregnated with starter fluid. The starter isn't needed and only reduces the life of your coals. I prefer the brand that already comes with my initial “K” monogrammed on each briquette. Light your initial batch of coals about 20 minutes prior using a charcoal chimney. Weber makes a great chimney that is not only larger than most, but the safest to use. Chimneys have a grate about 1/3 up from the bottom of the chimney to support the briquettes. Start by crumpling and stuffing the 3 pieces of standard size newsprint under the grate. Load the quantity of briquettes desired from the top of chimney and then light the newsprint. To have coals in half the time, place the chimney filled with charcoal on a lit burner of a large propane stove burner.

**CARING FOR MY FAVORITE COOK VESSEL!** It isn't as hard or as crazy as you may have been led to believe cast iron has a “seasoned” surface that protects it and creates a non-stick surface that was invented long before all the new-fangled coatings. I am no scientist, but I'm guessing that the seasoning on your properly cared for cast iron is a lot safer for your health (and it lasts for generations). Lets start with a few VERY important rules. 1. **Thou shall not** use soap to clean seasoned cast iron. 2. **Thou shall not** put cold water in a warm or hot Dutch oven unless thou wants a pot that is warped or shattered. 3. **Thou shall** store cast iron in a cool and dry location. Now that we have that out of the way, lets get to the more mundane tips on caring for your cast iron Dutch oven.

- ◆ Once the fun of cooking is over and all the food has been served or stored away, but while the group is still hurling praises your way, scrap out with a plastic scraper or wipe out with paper towels as much of the remaining food scraps as you can.
- ◆ Add about 1/2 to 3/4 inch of warm or hot water to dissolve and remove what food remains. Scrub with a natural fiber brush, carefully swishing the water and scrubbing the sides and bottom of the Dutch oven pot. Dispose of water. Repeat as many times as necessary to be sure that the surface is free of food scraps. An oven used to bake corn bread tends to require as little as one cycle while an oven used to cook a nice chili could take 3 or more cycles.
- ◆ Place the Dutch oven on a stove or coals and heat to about 250 to 300 degrees to dry. Remove from heat and spray with some nonstick canola/vegetable spray.
- ◆ Use the same process for cleaning you cast iron lids. Place the lid upside-down and add water to the surface. You won't fit much water on a lid with a concave surface compared to a flat bottom lid with a rim.
- ◆ A gas stove can speed up the process and make it easier.