

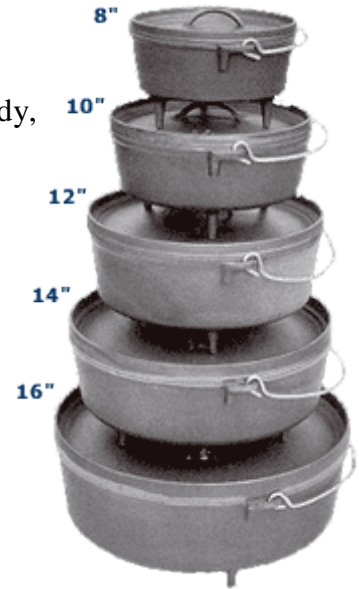
# Dutch Oven Care and Use

## Introduction

There are two basic kinds of Dutch Ovens; Cast Iron and Cast Aluminum. This page will focus solely on Cast Iron. You need to pick a quality Dutch Oven. There are many brands out there but the only one we'd recommend is the Lodge. Buying cast iron can last a life time.

This is what you need to look for no matter what brand you decide on:

1. The walls of the oven should be the same thickness all the way around.
2. There should only be three pieces in your Dutch Oven; The Body, The Lid and The Bail
  - a. The Bail should be thick and sturdy and should not be attached to a riveted tang. The Tang should be molded into the body of the oven.
  - b. The lid should fit securely in the body but able to come off without resistance.
  - c. The Bail should extend beyond the rim so you can get lid lifter on it easily.
  - d. The Lid Loop should be welded to the lid on both sides.
  - e. For outdoor Dutch Oven cooking (Is there any other kind?) the body should have legs on it, normally there will be three legs.
3. Don't get ovens with really short legs (not an issue for Lodge). This makes it real hard to get coals underneath them and makes it harder to do stack cooking.



## Selecting a Dutch Oven

Dutch ovens come in all sizes and shapes; round oval, deep, shallow, skillets, deep fryers, specialty ovens for bread, corn bread, fish, etc. Remember, you use top and bottom heat in most cases, so the shorter the oven the better heat will penetrate the middle of the oven. The taller the oven is results in the opposite.

Taller ovens are good for large stews, casseroles, bread and other dishes where the heat needs to be more controlled. Dutch ovens are typically measured by their circumference and depth. Typically Lodge Dutch Ovens are the most common you'll find.

We recommend a 12" Lodge Dutch oven for anyone just starting out. 12" Lodge's are a good size for patrols. It is a very versatile oven and one that is not overly large. Also, most Dutch oven recipes are written for a 12" or 14" oven. A 12" Deep or 14" Deep Lodge are the next best choices.

<b>Lodge Dutch Ovens</b>				
<b>Size</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Depth</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>8"</b>	2 qt	3"	11 lbs	Side dishes, vegetables, desserts, and sauces. Ideal when cooking for 2 or 3 people.
<b>10"</b>	4 qt	3 ½"	15 lbs	Side dishes, vegetables, beans, small roasts, desserts, and sauces.
<b>12"</b>	6 qt	3 ¾"	20 lbs	Roasts, poultry, fish, stews, potatoes, beans, rolls, breads, and desserts.
<b>12" (deep)</b>	8 qt	5"	23 lbs	Standing rib roasts, hams, whole chickens, stews, potatoes, beans, rolls, and breads.
<b>14"</b>	8 qt	3 ¾"	26 lbs	Larger roasts, poultry, stews, potatoes, rolls, breads, and desserts.
<b>14" (deep)</b>	10 qt	5"	28 lbs	Standing rib roasts, hams, hens, stews, potatoes, rolls, and breads.
<b>16"</b>	12 qt	4 ¼"	32 lbs	Large quantities of meat, stews, potatoes, rolls, breads, and desserts.

### **Seasoning a Dutch Oven**

There are almost as many techniques for seasoning your new Dutch Oven as there are owners of Dutch Ovens. Practically every book on Dutch Ovens includes a section on seasoning your Oven. Lodge includes directions on this subject with their Ovens.

1. If starting with a new unseasoned pot, follow the manufactures instruction for removing casting release and the light waxy substance that is used to protect the pot during shipping and storage. Then remove excess water with a cloth and thoroughly dry by warming the pot to between 100 and 120 degrees Fahrenheit. This is a temperature whereby you can handle the pot safely with a hot pad.
  - a. If your oven comes pre-seasoned you may not need this step. However, a pre-seasoned pot usually needs additional seasoning.
  - b. Don't wash your pot unless you are ready to season it. Even the slightest bit of moisture can rust a naked pot.
2. After washing, dry the Oven with lint-free clean white rags. Paper towels leave remnants all over your pot.
3. If you have a gas range turn on a burner and place the lid on the burner for about a minute or two. This will complete the drying process. Do this separately for both sides of the lid and both sides of the "pot." If you have an electric range turn the oven on "warm" and place the lid and pot separately in the oven, with the door slightly open. This is a routine you should get into for every time you rinse your Dutch Oven. The heat will pretty much insure no moisture is left on the Dutch Oven.
4. If you season your cast iron in the house, be prepared for the odor and a lot of smoke. Chances are you'll set off the smoke detector. You can use an outdoor propane grill providing it is big enough. The Dutch Oven should fit under the hood and the hood should completely close.
5. Before starting you'll need the following
  - a. Start your oven or grill preheating to 475°F.
  - b. Oven mitts

- c. Canola oil.
  - d. A sturdy lid/pot lifter
  - e. A lid/pot rack for placement between seasoning steps
  - f. Resting bars. You can use 1/4" stainless steel pipes to keep the cast iron off the grill surface. You want as little of the cast iron touching your grill as you can. This makes for a better finish and better circulation.
6. Lightly coat the surface with canola oil.
    - a. Why canola oil? Canola oil has a fairly high temperature smoke point of about 440°F while the smoke point of shortening or vegetable oil is around 320°F. The smoke point of corn oil is even lower and animal fats such as butter or lard lower still.
    - b. The advantages of the higher temperature smoke point oils are they are thinner and have less hydrogen atoms (the kitchen chemistry lesson continues). You've probably heard the term "hydrogenated vegetable shortening" or "saturated fats" and have you ever wondered what the fats are saturated with? The answer is hydrogen atoms.
    - c. The idea behind the seasoning process is to remove all the non-carbon components in the oil while leaving only carbon behind in such a manner that this carbon-carbon bond is formed. The non-carbon components are hydrogen and oxygen. During seasoning not all of the carbon stays on the pot. The majority of the carbon boils off the surface along with the oxygen and hydrogen. This is called "smoke" and carbon dioxide. Enough is left behind to do the job. When you start with oil that has less of the non-carbon components, the higher the carbon density of the oil and the harder the finished carbon-carbon bond surface will become. That is why Canola oil is a good choice.
  7. With a dry, lint-free rag wipe the excess oil so that there is a thin uniform coating on the entire pot and lid. Preheat the oven to 475°F. After the oven reaches temperature, carefully place the pot and lid in the oven on separate racks and close the oven door. If you are in the house, quickly run and open all the doors and windows to the house and turn on the exhaust fans. After 30 minutes, turn off the oven and leave the pot in the oven until the pot and lid are cool enough to handle. When it is removed, it's black. So black you would think it was painted with True Value High Temperature Semi-gloss Black Spray Paint.....but seriously folks,.....don't paint your pots.
    - a. If using your grill, place the cast iron on the metal resting bars in your grill and close the lid. Wait until ALL the smoke has stopped, this will let you know that it is finished for this round. Carefully (Because it's really hot at this point) remove the pot and lid using oven mitts and the lid lifter and place it on the rack. Do not put it on the ground, even with legs, hitting the cold ground could crack your pot.
  8. When the Dutch Oven is still warm but not too hot to handle (you should be able to touch it without getting burnt), re-coat the Dutch Oven with another thin coat of Canola.
  9. Repeat this process 3-4 times. The more you do it the better the season will be.
  10. Finally, when you are done let the pot get cold. Cover in a Dutch Oven case or cloth bag and store until ready to use.
  11. A properly seasoned Dutch Oven works better than Teflon. Putting Aluminum Foil in a Dutch Oven to prevent sticking is about as close to Blasphemy as you can get.

## **Cleaning a Dutch Oven**

Nothing is worse for Dutch Ovens than people who don't know how to care for cast iron and resort to lining it with aluminum foil. Never put aluminum foil in a Dutch oven. It doesn't heat evenly, makes it hard to get the food out, sticks to the bottom, and worst of all, it causes a reaction that will actually remove your seasoning. Cleaning a Dutch oven is easy.

Vinegar and water is the only thing you need to clean ANY cast iron. Mix white vinegar in a spray bottle at a 3-to-1 mixture (3 parts water to 1 part vinegar). When your Dutch Oven is still warm, spray it on the entire inside surface and put the lid back on for a few minutes. You will notice that all the stuff left in your Dutch Oven is now nice and soft. Just take a scraper of some sort and scrape off the excess. Then wipe with a cloth rag. Repeat this process a couple of times, and you should have a clean Dutch Oven.

If you had an "oops" and burned the bottom or have some real heavy caked on food in your Dutch Oven, fill it with water and put in a cup or so of vinegar. Heat the water until boiling. Put on the lid and within 10-15 minutes all the food will have disintegrated to the point that it'll almost wipe out with a rag.

Remember to heat your Dutch Oven after every cleaning to evaporate the moisture from the pores of the Dutch Oven. Apply a thin layer of Canola oil to all surfaces of the Dutch Oven, including the lid, and wipe off any excess. Allow to cool and then place a paper towel between the Dutch Oven and the lid. It is now ready to be used for the next meal or to be stored away.

## **Restoring Old or Rusty Dutch Ovens**

You can recover almost any cast iron cookware no matter how bad of shape it's in, but there are many do's and don'ts. It is a multi-stage project to get the job done correctly.

1. On your next camp out, when the fire is blazing, place your Dutch oven upside down in the fire and let it get red hot. This will burn off any food, grease, oil and even bad layers of metal which may remove much of the rust if there is any. After doing this your cookware is naked, ANY water or moisture that gets on it will rust it immediately so take extreme caution. Also be really careful, when cast iron gets this hot it is dangerous to handle and any sudden temperature changes will crack it.
2. After the fire treatment you may use coarse steel wool, a wire brush or a drill with a coarse cup base steel brush. After successfully removing the rust, immediately go into **seasoning** mode which was explained in detail above.

## **Regulating Temperature in Dutch Ovens**

Keep in mind the briquettes must be applied to both the top and the bottom. The chart below tells how many briquettes to use for a desired temperature. As a rule of thumb to achieve 325° use the following method. Take the size of the oven and take that number of briquettes less three for the bottom and that number plus three for the top. For example with 12" oven you would place 9 briquettes on the bottom (12-3) and 15 briquettes on the top (12+3).

<b>Temperature in Dutch Ovens</b>										
<b>Temperature Degrees F</b>	<b>8" Oven</b>		<b>10" Oven</b>		<b>12" Oven</b>		<b>14" Oven</b>		<b>16" Oven</b>	
	<b>Top</b>	<b>Bottom</b>	<b>Top</b>	<b>Bottom</b>	<b>Top</b>	<b>Bottom</b>	<b>Top</b>	<b>Bottom</b>	<b>Top</b>	<b>Bottom</b>
300°	10	4	12	6	14	8	16	10	18	12
325°	11	5	13	7	15	9	17	11	19	13
350°	12	6	14	8	16	10	18	12	20	14
375°	13	7	15	9	17	11	19	13	21	15

Note: Adding one set of briquettes (one on top and one on bottom) will raise the temperature of the Dutch Oven approximately 25°. Or conversely removing one set of briquettes will lower the temperature by 25°.