

Lesson Plan for Dutch Oven Cooking

Overview – we will cover:

- What's a Dutch Oven
- Sizes and types
- Seasoning (first time use)
- Cooking
- Cleanup
- Wrap-up

What's a Dutch Oven?

- It's an oven – provides a means to evenly heat food from all sides – just like your oven at home
- Great for:
- Roasting, baking, frying, boiling, stewing

Sizes and types

- Two basic types
 - Aluminum and cast iron
 - Troop only has cast iron, so we will address that type
- Dutch ovens come in many sizes – the most versatile is the 12”
- Most recipes are designed for this size oven; a meal made in a 12” oven can feed a patrol sized group
- Lets go over the parts:
 - Oven, top
 - Note that the oven has legs so you can put coals underneath
 - Top has a lip to hold coals – keeps them from sliding off
 - Bail handle – note that it lays flat in one direction and slightly elevated in the other making it easier to pick up
 - Handle on the lid – note the loop that makes it easy to pick up

Seasoning

- Before cast iron cookware can be used (this applies to all cast iron, not just the Dutch Oven), it must be “seasoned”
- You will not normally have to Dutch Oven this as it's a one time process
- If a piece of cast iron cookware rusts, it will have to be thoroughly cleaned and re-seasoned
- The steps in seasoning cast iron
 - First, thoroughly wash with water. If it's new from the factory, it will be shipped with a protective coating that must be completely removed. This will require a lot of scrubbing. Use steel wool if necessary.
 - Once it's completely clean, heat the oven in your home oven to make sure it is completely dry (be sure to leave the top off in this process to allow complete air flow so moisture will not be trapped).

- Next, put a thin coat of vegetable oil on all surfaces (include inside and outside of the oven, including the top).
- Bake it in your home oven at 350° for an hour (with the top separate to allow for circulation)
- Let it cool and repeat the oil baking process – another thin coat and another hour at 350°.
- When it cools, apply another thin coat of oil – the oven is now ready to use or store

Cooking

- Start the charcoal – you can use coals from a fire, but it's easier to regulate the temperature when you use charcoal briquettes
 - Methods for starting the charcoal
 - “Easy light” charcoal
 - Chimney
 - Charcoal starter
 - Fire starter stick
- Place the charcoal on the Dutch Oven
 - I'll go over the number to use in a minute
 - Charcoals on top go in a checkerboard pattern
 - Below, place about 2/3 of the way from the center
 - Charcoal heat will radiate in all directions and will tend to concentrate in the middle if too many are placed there
 - Number of briquettes
 - For 325° cooking (standard), use a number of charcoals equal to 2 times the size of the Dutch Oven in inches (for example, use 2 x 12 = 24 coals for a 12 inch Dutch Oven)
 - If the recipe calls for more heat figure on a 10-15° more for each briquette added
 - Split as follows:
 - Roasting: split evenly between top and bottom
 - Baking: 2 coals on top for each 1 underneath
 - Frying: All underneath
 - Stewing, simmering: 2 coals underneath for each 1 on top
- Follow the recipe
 - There are lots of recipes on line
 - We have lots in our library
 - Almost any cookbook recipe can be adapted for the Dutch Oven (after all, it is an oven!)
- Hints:
 - The idea is to maintain a constant temperature
 - If the wind is blowing or you're cooking next to a campfire, rotate about 90° every 10 minutes or so; also, rotate the lid in the opposite direction about 90° at the same time
 - Also, if the wind is blowing you might want to shield the Dutch Oven with aluminum foil.

- Resist the urge to peek. Every time you take the lid off, you lose heat and add about 10 min to the cooking time
- For longer cooking times, replenish the coals
 - Start another set
 - Place new ones next to the existing ones and let the “old” ones light the new ones

Cleanup

- Absolutely important to clean up a Dutch Oven as soon as you’re done with it
- Cast iron will rust quickly
- Never clean cast iron cookware with soap (it will get in the pores and the next meal will taste like soap)
- Steps to cleanup:
 - Remove as much food as possible
 - If it’s clean at this point, skip to the “oil” step
 - Pour water in the oven (but not a hot oven!)
 - Heat the water and use a plastic scraper or scrubber to remove remaining food
 - Rinse – repeat if necessary
 - Dry completely (heat until it’s warm to the touch to assist in the drying process)
 - Oil step - place a thin layer of vegetable oil on all of the interior surfaces
 - Place some folded paper or a paper towel between the lid and body so air can circulate and any remaining moisture can evaporate

Wrap-up

- A well maintained Dutch Oven will last a lifetime – so maintain it well!
- Keep it clean
- Safety: A Dutch Oven can be very hot! Keep people away from it when you’re cooking. Use the lid lifter and leather gloves
- Dutch ovens can be stacked when cooking
- Placing the coals on aluminum foil, particularly on damp ground, helps them burn and radiates more heat upward
- The Dutch oven’s top can make a great griddle
 - Turn it over and place coals underneath
 - The slightly concave shape will keep pancakes or eggs from slipping off
- When taking a Dutch oven camping, don’t forget that you need more than just the oven
 - Charcoal
 - Shovel
 - Tongs (usually in the chuck box)
 - Lid lifter
 - Lid holder
 - Vegetable oil (usually in the chuck box)

- Plastic scraper for cleanup
- Aluminum foil
- Leather gloves

Questions???