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Seasoning An Oven

By Glea Reno and Dennis Reno

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by: **Glea Reno and Dennis Reno**

Untreated cast iron rusts, especially around water. To prevent metal from oxidizing in the presence of moisture, cast iron requires a process called "seasoning". Seasoning is simply the procedure of baking oil into the oven's pores, and on top of the iron pores. This baked on coating will darken and eventually turn black with age. Darkening is the sign of a well kept oven, and of its use. This coating forms a barrier between moisture in the air and the surface of the metal. It also provides a non-stick coating on the inside of the oven that is easy to clean.

Here are some tips when it comes time to season your oven.

Scrub lid and oven in hot water with a mild soap to take off the coating the manufacture puts on the oven before shipping. Use a stiff brush, 3M scrub pad, or plastic scrubbing pad to scrub the waxy coating off of your new Dutch oven, and rinse in clear, hot water. Dry your oven by putting it in the kitchen oven at 150 to 200 degrees for 15 or 20 minutes.

While it is warm, coat the inner and outer surfaces with a thin layer of cooking oil. Use a good grade of olive or vegetable oil. Peanut oil is a choice of many, and tallow or lard can also be used, but they tend to break down over time and become rancid if the oven is not used often enough.

Place the oven and lid in a conventional oven, or a gas BBQ grill, with the pot upside down and the lid on the Dutch oven legs. Heat oven at 450 to 500 degrees and bake for 30 to 40 minutes until the oil turns very dark, nearly black. This process bakes a grease coating into the pot and virtually gives it a no scrub surface.

Remove the oven and apply another light coat of oil, and. bake at 450 to 500 degrees for another 30 minutes. By using high temperatures, the oil will bake harder and darker, leaving your oven shinier. You should oil and bake at least once, I like to go through this process two, or even three times to get a beautiful dark color, and rock hard finish.

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Turn off the heat and let the Dutch oven sit until cool. If the surface is sticky, bake an additional 30 to 40 minutes. When seasoning your oven it will create a smell that may be unpleasant. For this reason some like to season their ovens in a BBQ outside, however I have done all mine indoors with the doors and windows open.

The first thing you cook in your oven after seasoning should be things like roasts, potatoes or chicken. Stay away from tomatoes and tomato products with high acid content, or a lot of sugar such as cobblers. Acids and sugars can break down the protective covering before it seasons or hardens properly.

A well seasoned oven produces a unique flavor unequaled by any other cooking utensil. This is the Magic of Dutch Oven cooking.

Glea Reno and Dennis Reno are the owners of

. They are based at Billings,

Montana and have taught Youth Groups, Scout Troops, Church Organisation and friends what they have learned over years in Dutch oven cooking. They also do cooking demonstration at various retail outlets. They can be contacted at

Cleaning and Storing your Dutch Oven

By Glea Reno and Dennis Reno

There are many opinions on cleaning a Dutch Oven. Not all Dutch Oven cooks believe you can use soap in your Dutch Oven. Some cooks suggest never to wash them, others wash them, but not with detergent. We have found that a well-seasoned oven will not be damaged by using a few drops of dishwashing soap if you have been cooking something really greasy. Just be sure to rinse several times to make sure there is no soap residue. If your oven is not well-seasoned, whatever you put in the oven will be absorbed into the pot and become part of your next meal.

Dutch Oven care begins with seasoning, but it's important to clean them properly after each use. Cleaning cast iron is easier than scrubbing pots and pans. As soon as possible after using your Dutch Oven, scrape out as much food as possible with a plastic scraper. Put 1 – 2 quarts of hot water in your oven and scrub with a plastic scrubbing pad or a vegetable brush. Immediately after washing, dry the oven thoroughly by putting it in your kitchen oven at 150 to 200 degrees for about 10 minutes.

Cast Iron can only be dried by heating. Heat dries out the moisture in the pores. If a pot is not completely dried after it is used, it will rust. The pores must be opened by heating up, and the moisture dried out of it. Don't let the oven set around after washing, go straight from draining the rinse water into the kitchen oven if possible. If you are camping and don't have a kitchen oven to dry a Dutch Oven, dry

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it the best you can and try and store it away from moisture.

Dutch Ovens when cared for, will last for generations. Be sure your oven has been cleaned and lightly oiled before putting it away. Try to keep your ovens in a dry, warm place. Remember, moisture with cause cast iron to rust. Leave your lids slightly ajar, allowing the air to circulate. I like to store with a paper towel rolled up and sticking out from under the lid. The towel inside the oven acts as a wick and will help absorb moisture.

Tip: Here's another idea. If you need to store an oven for long periods of time, use a light-weight food-grade Mineral Oil and coat the oven, inside and out. It's cheap and effective. Once you have sealed the oven with mineral oil, no oxygen can reach the seasoning and it will last many months.

With correct use and proper care, a well seasoned oven produces a unique flavor unequaled by any other cooking utensil. That's the Magic, it looks great and tastes even better!

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