

Seasoning, Care and Use of the Dutch Oven

When you purchase a new Dutch Oven, or any cast iron product, you must first remove the protective coating. It is placed there after manufacture to protect from rust. The best way to remove this is with hot soapy water and a wire scrubber. I prefer to scrub it two or three times, rinsing after each time to feel if it is still there. After the cleaning, rinse with hot water to clean off the soap.

Next, it needs to be dried till there is no moisture left on the oven. The easiest way dry a Dutch Oven is to put it in a warm (160ish) kitchen oven for 30 minutes or so, then let it cool enough to handle it.

Now you are ready to begin the seasoning process. I prefer lard or white shortening and not oil. Oil tends to make it very sticky afterwards. Using a paper towel, apply the shortening or lard to the inside and outside of the oven until all is coated. Put some extra inside the oven. Do the same with the lid.

Put both in a 425 degree kitchen oven and bake for one hour. Then, using tongs and a paper towel, swish the excess seasoning inside the oven around coating the entire area and lid.

When the time is up, remove from the oven and swish the excess seasoning on all the inside to coat and let sit in the oven until cool. Using a paper towel, wipe the inside of the oven to coat again all inside surface and then wipe all the excess out to just leave a thin coating on the oven.

Now you are ready to start cooking.

It is best to begin with foods which require a lot of oil such as deep fried foods or bread as they tend to continue to coat the oven. After each use wash only in very hot water to clean. If you cooked bread in it, wipe a light coating of seasoning on and you are ready to go again. It does not require washing out. If you cooked something which stuck to the oven, put oven back on the heat source and heat until it boils and use a plastic spoon to remove the stuck food.

Dump out the water and rinse with hot water at least twice, wipe out with a paper towel and then apply a light coat of seasoning to the oven and you are ready to cook again. If you are going to store your oven, place a paper towel inside the oven to help absorb any moisture. Almost any seasoning will become rancid if you leave it for a long time. If you are going to store your oven or not use it for a long time, simply store it without the lid and apply a light coat of mineral oil and it will not become rancid. Store in a location where it is protected from moisture and dust.

If the oven gets rusty, you can clean it up by soaking the rusty area in Coca Cola for an hour. Then scrub with wire scrubber only where it is rusty. Then, rinse it out and re-season that part of the oven again by applying a coat of seasoning and heat to 425 degrees for 30

minutes. You are now ready to begin cooking with it again. There are times when, during the process of seasoning it, too much seasoning is applied and a build up occurs and, after a while, it will begin to flake off. The only remedy here is to clean off the flaking material and start over again or just continue to cook in it as it is.

A well seasoned Dutch Oven is a prized possession and will last a lifetime and can be passed on to your family as an heirloom which will function as long as it is taken care of properly. Enjoy every minute of your time while cooking in these wonderful ovens. They provide so much wonderful food and wonderful times when they are properly cared for. This requires a minimal amount of care after each use. The biggest sin in using the Dutch Oven is to use it and then not clean it for days or even weeks. There are actually people who do that, requiring the oven to be seasoned again.

One more note: Be careful with high acidic foods as they will eat away at the seasoning on the oven.

HAPPY COOKING!