

Use and Care of Cast Iron Cookware

Skillets and Dutch Ovens

Cooking with Cast Iron

- Pre-heat the cast iron slowly (always start on low heat, increasing the temperature slowly).
- Before cooking, apply vegetable oil to the cooking surface of your pan – use a paper towel to spread it around and to avoid an excess of oil
- Once the utensil is properly pre-heated, you are ready to cook.
- While pre-heating is critical, take care not to let it sit too long waiting for food. An empty hot pan could crack.

Tips

- Avoid cooking very cold food in the pan, as this can promote sticking.
- Do not use METAL utensils with cast iron cookware
- Handles will become very hot in the oven, and on the stovetop. Always use an oven mitt to prevent burns when removing pans from oven or stovetop.
- Don't let it sit with just the oil/butter in it for long before adding the food. It will begin to re-season it and could become gummy and sticky.
- Unless you use your cast iron pans often, they should be washed briefly and then rinsed and thoroughly dried in order to rid them of excess surface oil. *If you do not do this, the surplus oil will become rancid.*

Every time you cook in your cast iron frying pan, you are actually seasoning it again by filling in the microscopic pores and valleys that are part of the cast iron surface. The more you cook, the smoother the surface becomes.

Cleaning Cast Iron

- Immediately after use, clean cast iron cookware with a stiff nylon brush, a plastic scraper or paper towels and hot water. Using soap is not recommended, and harsh detergents should never be used.
- Don't let it sit and soak for long periods of time in the sink. It will cause it to rust.
- If you do have stuck on food in the pan, try boiling water in the pan to remove the gunk before you move on to scrubbing.
- DO NOT put a hot utensil into cold water. Thermal shock can occur causing the metal to warp or crack.
- Dry the cast iron immediately after washing
- Place the cleaned cast iron frying pan on the heated burner of your stove for a minute or two to make sure that it is completely dry. While the pan is still hot and on the stove burner, **lightly** oil inside of pan with vegetable oil or Crisco. Use a paper towel to spread the oil lightly over the pan.
- Remove from hot burner and wipe excess oil off the pan with a paper towel.

Storing Cast Iron

- Store Dutch ovens with the lids off, so that moisture does not build up. Place a couple of paper towels inside to make sure that any moisture that forms will be absorbed by the paper towel.

Tips

- If you are having trouble removing stuck-on food, boil some water in your pan for a few minutes to loosen residue, making it easier to remove.
- Towel dry immediately and apply a light coating of oil to the utensil while it is still warm.
- Do not let your cast iron air dry, as this can promote rust.
- Store in a cool, dry place. If you have a cover, or lid, for your utensil, place a folded paper towel in between lid and utensil allowing air to circulate. This prevents moisture from collecting inside the utensil, which can cause rust.

Seasoning Cast Iron

To season a cast iron pan means to create a slick and glassy coating by baking on multiple thin coats of oil. This will protect the cast iron pan from getting rusted and makes for a non-stick cooking surface.

You season a cast iron pan by rubbing it with a relatively ***thin coat*** of neutral food-grade. Rub the oil off with paper towels or a cotton cloth. The pan will look like there is no oil left on the surface, but there is as the oil is just very thin. Use vegetable oils (canola, sunflower, etc.), shortening (like Crisco shortening) or lard for seasoning your cast iron pans.

The oil fills the cavities and becomes entrenched in them, as well as rounding off the peaks. By seasoning a new pan, the cooking surface develops a nonstick quality because the formerly jagged and pitted surface becomes smooth. Also, because the pores are permeated with oil, water cannot seep in and create rust that would give food an off-flavor.

Place the cast iron pan, upside down, in the oven, with a sheet of aluminum foil on the bottom to catch any drips. Heat the pan for 30 minutes in a 350 degree F. oven. Once done, turn off the oven, and let the pan cool to room temperature in the oven. Repeating this process several times is recommended as it will help create a stronger "seasoning" bond.

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