

Care

- Seasoned
 - Patina protects the oven from rust
 - Gives non-stick properties to the oven
 - Makes it easier to cleanup
 - If a new oven has a protective layer of wax, burn it off in an outside fire pit, then clean and season
 - Most come pre-seasoned now, so just rinse it out and use it
- To season or re-season a dutch oven
 - Clean it and dry it completely
 - Heat it to 225° degrees to allow the oil to absorb better
 - Apply a thin coat of vegetable oil evenly to the entire pot and lid, inside and out
 - Wipe off all excess oil (no dripping or pooling)
 - Place both pieces upside down in a pre-heated 500° oven for an hour
 - Make sure your house is properly vented (or use an outdoor BBQ)
 - Turn off the oven and let the dutch oven cool
 - The oven should have a slick, but dry (not sticky) feel
 - Repeat the process 5 or more times to build a strong patina base
- To clean a dutch oven
 - Allow the oven to cool
 - Fill with warm water
 - Scrape food off with plastic scraper or scrubber
 - Strain the food bits and put them in the garbage
 - Cast the water
 - Repeat until totally clean
 - DO NOT USE SOAP! Soap gets into the metal and ruins the seasoning (and the taste of your next meal)
- Wipe dry, air dry, or warm on low heat for a few minutes to completely dry
- Store dry with paper towel inside the oven to absorb moisture
- Roll up paper towel or napkin to keep lid propped open for air flow
- Some people store ovens with a light coating of oil to help protect them, but if you don't use the oven within a couple weeks, the oil often goes rancid, making the next meal taste bad
- Don't allow oven to stay wet
- Don't put cold water on a hot oven - warp or crack
- Don't leave an empty oven over coals or fire - warp or crack

Coals

- Use Kingsford charcoal. Bargain brands seem not to last as long.
- You can cook on an open fire or wood coals, but the heat is not as consistent
- Cook in fire pit, metal garbage can lid w/bricks, or coal table
- Clear out existing ash as it can smother coals
- Use tongs, glove, and a lid lifter
- Charcoal chimney and newspaper (don't need lighter fluid)
- Charcoal should be ready in about 15 minutes
- Top coals in the chimney should have a grayish look to them
- Rule of 3 for coals (dutch oven diameter size +3 for top, -3 for bottom)
- More or less coals for non-standard height ovens
- Ring coals just inside the footprint of the oven
- Wind, cold, rain, and moist surfaces, etc. affect coals and heat

Cooking

- Prepare as much as you can at home
- Plan to cook slow while you relax
- An oven full of chili or stew cooks in about an hour
- Bread, cake, and egg dishes can burn (fewer coals on bottom and/or remove bottom coals)
- Check food regularly by opening slowly and carefully with a lid-lifter
- Huddle around if it is windy
- Don't set the lid on the ground
- Rotate ovens on coals and lids on ovens without lifting the lid off of the oven. 1/4 turn in opposite directions every 15 minutes. This moves the heat around the oven and minimizes hot spots burning the food.
- Adjust coals as needed
- You may need to light more coals to finish cooking your meal
- Stack ovens to conserve coals and space
- Fry in the lid and the pot