



**What is a Dutch Oven?** The type of Dutch oven used by campers is most often a “camp Dutch Oven” Unlike the Dutch oven used at home in your kitchen, a camp Dutch oven typically has 3 legs that elevate it above the coals that provide heat to the bottom of the

oven. A camp oven without legs is elevated using either a lid stand or 3 small rocks. The top of the lid of a camp Dutch oven has a rim. The rim helps prevent the ash and coals from the heat source on top of the oven from falling into the pot and adding an unwanted seasoning to your culinary treat. The lid of the oven also has a center loop. The center loop is used with a lid lifter to both spin and remove the lid. A camp Dutch oven will also have a wire bail looping from one side of the pot to the other to create a handle to lift the camp oven. Camp Dutch ovens have a flat bottom, while the underneath of the lid is either flat or concave. Most camp ovens are cast iron yet ovens that are 1/3 the weight are sometimes available in cast aluminum. Both types work equally well, but the cast aluminum loses heat more quickly, which could be an issue especially in cold and windy conditions. Ovens come in several sizes to accommodate the number of people being served and the type of cooking being performed.

**THE HEAT IS ON!** Although using coals directly from a nice hardwood campfire could be a convenient source of heat, the use of charcoal briquettes provides a source of even heat that is easier to regulate and control. Use a quality charcoal that has not been impregnated with starter fluid. The starter fluid isn't needed and only reduces the life of your coals. Light the initial batch of coals about 20 minutes prior to needing the coals using a charcoal chimney. Weber makes a great chimney that is not only larger than most, but the safest to use. Chimneys have a grate about 1/3 up from the bottom of the chimney to support the briquettes. Start by crumpling and stuffing the 3 pieces of standard size newsprint under the grate. Load the quantity of briquettes desired from the top of chimney and then light the newsprint. To have coals in half the time, place the chimney filled with charcoal on a lit burner of a large propane stove. No need for newsprint with this method.

**DO THE SPIN TO PREVENT HOT AND RAW SPOTS!** Each coal creates a focused area of heat. A little periodic rotation of the lid and the pot will even out the heat being supplied to your oven goodies. This is especially important when baking. Every 10 to 15 minutes, using your lid lifter, pick up and spin the pot about a 1/3 rotation in one direction. Then spin the lid a 1/3 rotation in the opposite direction. Keep gentle pressure down on the lid when spinning. Lifting the lid causes heat to escape, which will extend the time required before your food is ready to eat.

# GRUBMASTERS

## Outdoor Cooking

# All About Dutch Ovens

### NECESSARY GEAR AND GADGETS TO GET YOU STARTED



**LID LIFTER:** This is a must have. A lid lifter is used for lifting the lid without dumping ash into your food, spinning the lid and lifting/spinning the whole Dutch oven. There are plenty of options including our favorite style that has a slide action that acts as a clamp to more firmly remove and maneuver an ash and hot coal covered lid.

**LID STAND:** A lid stand is primarily used to place a Dutch oven lid while the lid is loaded with coals. The stand keeps the inside surface of the lid free of dirt and leaves. It also can be used to support the lid when using the lid as a griddle by placing the stand upside down over coals with the lid on the stand upside down.



**CHIMNEY:** Used to ignite charcoal, the chimney has a grate placed horizontally in the cylinder about 1/3 of the way up from the bottom. Charcoal is placed above the grate and three pieces of crumpled newsprint are placed below. The lit newsprint is enough to ignite the charcoal.

**CHARCOAL TONGS:** When using charcoal as the heat source, this tool is a must. It is used to retrieve coals from the chimney and to arrange coals on and under the Dutch oven. Be sure to purchase a pair that is 16 inches in length or longer.



**LEATHER GLOVES:** Gloves will certainly reduce the battle wounds. Whether it's handling the oven during cooking or afterwards during the clean up process, the gloves make handling items, especially the lid, much easier and safer.



**SCRUB BRUSH:** Used to scrub food debris from the inside of the pot, a scrub brush is a necessary tool for cleaning your cast iron without damaging its seasoning. The handle allows scrubbing the surface inside the oven with hot water without getting burned. A brush with natural fiber bristles holds up better on a hot pot. Don't use wire brushes or Brillo type pads.



**SCRAPER:** A plastic scraper is used to remove stuck-on food debris before scrubbing the pot. Especially helpful when cleaning up after a cobbler or stew. A scraper saves both time and wear on your scrub brush.



### ORGANIZATIONS & GATHERINGS:

**DOGS:** You may have a dog, but have you attended a DOG? In the world of Dutch oven enthusiasts, a DOG is a Dutch Oven Gathering. DOGs provide an opportunity for those with the common interest in camp Dutch oven cooking to come together. Each prepares a dish that is then shared at one of the best potluck dinners you will ever attend.

**IDOS:** The primary organized group of Dutch oven cooks is the International Dutch Oven Society. (Yes, it really exists!) The group helps promote the skills of Dutch oven cooking through education, gatherings and friendly competitions. Members join individually with many participating in local chapters. For more information, visit [www.idos.org](http://www.idos.org)



**WHY DO DUTCH OVENS COME IN SO MANY DIFFERENT SIZES?** Regardless of the diameter of the Dutch oven, most sizes come in either “regular” or “deep” depth pots. A regular depth oven is sometimes referred to as “shallow”. Regular depth ovens work well for baking cakes and corn breads. Deep ovens are perfect for a whole chicken, roast or one-pot meal. The choice of diameter depends on the volume of food you need to cook. For a group of 6 to 8 people, a 12 inch Dutch oven will likely meet your needs depending on the appetites and whether it is a main course, side dish or dessert. The following are the different sizes of Lodge brand Dutch ovens and their respective volume:

- 6 INCH** (only comes Regular) holds 1 Quart
- 8 INCH** (only comes Regular) holds 3 Quarts
- 10 INCH REGULAR** holds 4 Quarts
- 10 Inch Deep** holds 5 Quarts
- 12 Inch Regular** holds 6 Quarts
- 12 Inch Deep** holds 8 Quarts
- 14 Inch Regular** holds 8 Quarts
- 14 Inch Deep** holds 10 Quarts
- 16 INCH** (only comes Regular) holds 12 Quarts

**Author's Choice** on a great general purpose oven is the 12 inch Deep. The 16 inch Dutch ovens are no longer manufactured by Lodge. **Aluminum Dutch ovens** manufactured by GSI are commonly available in a 10 inch diameter/regular depth without legs and 12 inch diameter/regular depth with legs sizes.



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## Outdoor Cooking

YouTube <http://youtube.com/c/grubmasters>

**ANYTHING YOU CAN COOK AT HOME IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD OVEN, YOU CAN COOK IN A CAMP DUTCH OVEN.** Actually, that statement can be expanded to also include anything you can cook on your stove at home. From baking cakes, to cooking a stew, to frying eggs; the camp Dutch oven has you covered.

**Baking** is performed with heat supplied both on the top and bottom of the oven. When using charcoal as the heat source, the rule of thumb is to take the diameter of the oven and add 2 to determine the number of briquettes to place on the top of the oven. For the bottom, take the diameter of the oven and subtract 2. A 12 inch diameter oven would require 14 briquettes on top of the lid and 10 under the oven. Placement of coals can be in "checkerboard" pattern below and above the oven. Another option is the ring method where the top briquettes are evenly placed against the rim of the lid and in a ring under the oven in a ring of the same diameter as the bottom of the oven. Most baking tasks benefit from preheating the oven by adding heat 15 to 20 minutes prior to adding the item to be baked.

**Stews, chilies and most one-pot meals** will rely primarily on bottom heat. Adjust your temperature based on the stage of preparation. When browning the meat as you begin the dish, place the oven on a single layer bed of coals at least the diameter of the oven bottom. Once to the simmering stage, reduce the amount of heat by reducing the volume of coals or delaying replenishing coals as they expire. A little top heat with a ring of coals on top of the lid can also help in simmering, especially in cold weather and full pots. *It's not immoral to consider using your gas camp stove to provide bottom heat for the Dutch oven.*

**Frying eggs, pancakes and bacon** can be accomplished in one of two different methods. The first method is to use the bottom of the pot as the frying pan. Create the desired amount of heat by the number of coals under the oven. To fry the bacon, start with an even, full bed of coals at least the diameter of the bottom of the oven. You will need a little less heat for frying the eggs and pancakes. Start with half a bed of coals and add more if required to reach the desired temperature. You may be faced with some extra challenges flipping and maneuvering your treats depending on the depth and diameter of your oven. **The lid of the oven can also be used as a frying surface.** Place a lid stand upside down so it's not in the way of the loop on the lid. Arrange your coals evenly in a ring at least the diameter of your lid. With lid upside-down, rest it centered on the lid stand. Depending on the brand of oven, the lid surface will either be slightly concave or flat.

**CARING FOR MY FAVORITE COOK VESSEL!** It isn't as hard or as crazy as you may have been led to believe to care for your cast iron. "Seasoned" cast iron has a surface that protects and creates a nonstick surface that was invented long before all the new-fangled coatings. We are no scientists, but we're guessing that the seasoning on your properly cared for cast iron is a lot safer for your health (and it lasts for generations). Let's start with a few VERY important rules. 1. **Thou shall not** use soap to clean seasoned cast iron. 2. **Thou shall not** put cold water in a warm or hot Dutch oven unless thou wants a pot that is warped or shattered. 3. **Thou shall** store cast iron in a cool and dry location. Now that we have that out of the way, let's get to the more mundane tips on caring for your cast iron Dutch oven.

- ◆ Once the fun of cooking is over and all the food has been served or stored away, but while the group is still hurling praises your way, scrape out with a plastic scraper or wipe out with paper towels as much of the remaining food scraps as you can.
- ◆ Add about 1/2 to 3/4 inch of warm or hot water to dissolve and remove what food remains. Scrub with a natural fiber brush, carefully swishing the water and scrubbing the sides and bottom of the Dutch oven pot. Dispose of water. Repeat as many times as necessary to be sure that the surface is free of food scraps. An oven used to bake corn bread tends to require as little as one cycle while an oven used to cook a nice chili could take 3 or more cycles.
- ◆ Place the Dutch oven on a stove burner or coals. Heat to about 250 to 300 degrees to dry. Remove from heat and spray with light coating of nonstick canola/vegetable spray. Wipe off any excess oil.
- ◆ Use the same process for cleaning your cast iron lids. Place the lid upside-down and add water to the surface. You won't fit much water on a lid with a concave surface compared to a flat bottom lid with a rim.



### GEAR AND GADGETS A LITTLE BEYOND THE BASICS



**DUTCH OVEN STORAGE BAGS :** The proper storage of a Dutch oven can help the oven be around for generations. Sturdy bags are available to help protect the Dutch oven from dust, dirt, critters and surrounding conditions. Most bags have some type of padding or thicker fabric, a zippered lid and straps to aid in moving bagged Dutch ovens. Bags come in various sizes to accommodate the variety of Dutch oven sizes. **TIP:** Most bags can fit more than one Dutch oven. Use care when stacking to be sure there is extra space around stacked ovens. When using two

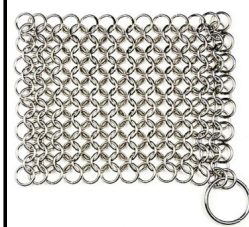
ovens of the same diameter but different depth, start by placing the lid of the shallow oven in the bottom of the bag on top of newspaper or a clean cloth with the bottom down. Place the shallow oven upright on top of the lid. Lay newspaper or a clean cloth inside the shallow Dutch oven. Now place the deep oven, including its lid in place, inside the shallow oven.

**DUTCH OVEN TABLE:** The addition of an elevated surface can be a relief to your back while making sure that no damage is caused to the surfaces under your oven. A sturdy enough table should be able support several ovens filled with delicious food. There are a variety of manufactured tables commercially available including the Lodge brand table. The tables have either detachable or folding legs, a flat metal solid cooking surface and wind shield on 3 sides.



**HOG FEEDING PAN:** A simple inexpensive cooking surface can be provided by a metal pan. A typical pan has a 3 gallon capacity, is 4 inches deep, is 16 inches wide and is weather resistant. Smaller and much larger pans are also available. The sides of an upright pan act as a shield from wind as well as a reflector of heat. The pan also make cleanup easier by containing the ash and coals within the pan. An upside down pan can minimize heat damage to the surface below.

**CHARCOAL STORAGE CONTAINER:** Don't put a damper on your Dutch oven cooking by letting moisture absorb into your charcoal. Although commercial manufactured charcoal bins can be purchased, a inexpensive and equally functional container alternative is a plastic pail from cat litter or cat food.



**CHAINMAIL:** Not every bit of baked on food can be removed with a scraper or scrub brush. A small section of stainless steel chainmail can be a true lifesaver to both your cast iron as well as your knuckles when working to removed stubborn baked on food clinging to your prized cast iron..

**BRUSH OR WHISK BROOM:** A wide natural stiff bristled brush or a small whisk broom can help in cleaning ash from the lid of a Dutch oven especially when cooking food for long periods of time without the need to remove the lid which would allow heat to escape.



**TRIPOD:** Cook like a cowboy by supporting your oven over a fire with a tripod especially when cooking food that requires only bottom heat. Options include a tripod fashioned with wooden staves with a rope lashing and a length of rope to hang the oven or a manufactured metal rod tripod with a chain and "s" hooks. The amount of heat to the bottom of the oven can be adjusted by raising or lowering the Dutch oven. Coals can still be added to the top of the oven when top heat is required. Be sure to use a little extra care when removing the lid to prevent a dusting of ash on your food.



**DUTCH OVEN FOIL LINERS:** Some Dutch oven cooks may frown on them, but nothing can make your cleanup easier than a foil liner. This is especially true when cooking foods that can cling or burn onto surfaces of your oven, when access to water for clean up is a challenge and when time for clean up is limited. Manufactured liners are available for regular depth 10", 12" and 14" ovens. Unlike regular foil pans, foil liners fit snugly in the pot lapping over rim preventing spill overs into the pot.

**PARCHMENT PAPER LINERS:** Although not as durable as a foil liner, commercially available parchment paper liners can aid in clean up. The liners can also be helpful in allowing baked items from being more easily removed from the oven in one piece. One size fits all with the 20" diameter liners. Excess paper can be cut off or folded under.

