



ABOUT DUTCH OVENS:

In North America, the Dutch oven probably dates back to 1492 when Columbus brought cast-iron pots to our shores. As the name implies, yearly Dutch traders sold their cast iron pots for settlers and Indians. They have been hanging over fires in colonial homes to chuckwagons. If you look at how much these ovens were used in the fireplace or cooking fire at camps, it's just astounding. There were no Teflon pans or Easy Bake Ovens, just cast iron!

What Makes a Good Dutch?

An authentic oven will be of heavy cast iron, a flat bottom and has 3 short legs. The wire handle should be of heavy wire, securely attached to the oven and folds out of the way easily. The lid should fit evenly on the top edge fairly tightly. The lid itself should have a handle that is part of the cast iron, not attached by other means, the handle is very important since you don't want to dump coals into your food. Handles on the side of an oven are useless, so avoid them. One of the major manufactures is Lodge, they have been making ovens since 1896 and are by far the best on the market.

Besides cast iron, there are aluminum ovens on the market. These are much lighter and are mostly used in backpacking and remote camps. These are a little harder to cook with since they don't generate heat evenly as cast iron and can be a little harder to clean.

Ovens come in a variety of sizes ranging from the tiny 4” to the Goliath 24” monster. For most situations, the 10-12” sizes are about right for most cooking.

- 5” - ? Desserts and single servings
- 8” - 2 qt Desserts and side dishes 2-3 servings
- 10” - 4qt Baked Breads, cakes, rolls 3-5 servings
- 12” - 6qt Main Dishes- 4-6 servings
- 12”D - 7qt Tall Roasts,
- 14” - 8qt Larger Groups
- 14”D - 10qt Larger Groups
- 16” - 12qt Big Groups



Getting it ready to use;

Many ovens will come with the “Factory Seasoning”. Do not believe it, you need to do a proper job of completing what they call “Seasoning”. This is the first and only time I use soap and hot water on an oven. You need to get the oven clean inside and out including the lid. Your goal here is to get your seasoning on every single inch of oven; this ensures it will last longer than you will! Once it is washed, put it in the oven for about an hour on 150 degrees, this will ensure that it is completely dry. Then let’s get some Crisco Vegetable Shortening and smear a liberal coating on the entire oven.

At this point, we need to decide how to apply the heat to the oven. We have three main ways of achieving this.

1. Use your oven in the house.
2. Add briquettes outside.
3. Use your BBQ outside.

My selection is always #3. The oven will smoke like an old steam engine and if it’s indoors, momma ain’t gonna be happy. Using coals will work but it tends to leave areas that do not get seasoned off. This was the way it was done for

hundreds of years, but why not use technology and get a great job. Now the BBQ, allows me to adjust the heat and watch it. With the BBQ, I can see when it stops smoking and starts the seasoning, and momma remains “Happy”. This is by far the best way to get the job done.

You want whatever method you use at 250 to 300 degrees for 2-3 hours. Let it cool off before handling, remember we like this stuff because it RETAINS heat.

Ready to Cook;

With the oven ready, we need to look at our choices for heat. My personal choice is Kingsford Charcoal briquettes. Other choices would be wood charcoal or using the campfire once it is coals to cook with. The nice thing about charcoal is that the heat from a briquette is constant. So keeping the heat “just right” is easier. If you are new to Dutch, use the briquettes. I even know of pro’s that only use Kingsford. Now for getting coals ready, there is nothing like a chimney. This is by far the best and most convenient way to start and hold coals until you are ready for them. Just some newspaper in the base and Wala....coals!



Other Items; you Should Have;

- Heavy Gloves
- Lid Lifter
- Lid Stand
- 16” Tongs
- Paper Towels
- Long Spoon and Fork
- Firepan or Cooking Table (optional)
- Shovel and Bucket for coals

Setting Up To Cook;

With your oven seasoned and your supplies at hand, the choice now is what set up to use. You can use a firepan or cooking table which elevates the ovens to a useful height, or just use the ground. Picking one of these will dictate what you do for the #1 killer of heat...Wind! You have to deal with the wind when you pick out a spot to cook to either use the windbreak on the cooking table or make one up on the ground. So check the wind and make sure you don't have a draft around the coals.

Next, you will want to put a light coat of vegetable oil on the inside of the oven and the underside of the lid. This adds one more layer of protection for the oven and will help increase the seasoning.

With all the prepping done, get your ingredients in the oven, and let's get the coals hot and do some cooking.

Coal Arrangement and Temperature Control;

Now the most fundamental thing to do with a Dutch is to get the temperature right! Once you have this down, you can cook just about anything the same way you would in the oven at home. Now we need to remember that the basic law that Heat Rises. For baking, a rough number coals could be determined by: Multiply by 2, the diameter of the oven you are using. So a 12" oven would need 24 coals. Now divide that by 3 and put 2/3 on the top and 1/3 under the bottom. Since heat rises, we need more heat down to evenly heat the oven.

I generally start the coals in the chimney, then shake them out on to my cooking stand. Some will be fully burning and some will need more time. So pick through what you have to get some with about the same color. We are then going to spread them out in a circular pattern under the oven. We will do the same with the lid, only the pattern will be closer together. Make sure you leave some room to get at the handle on the lid.

On the next page, is a temperature chart that may help you selecting the # of coals. Also keep in mind that generally speaking, one coal will change the temp about 10 degrees. So add one or take one out as needed.

Baking Temperature Chart for Dutch Oven Cooking by Lodge Cast Iron

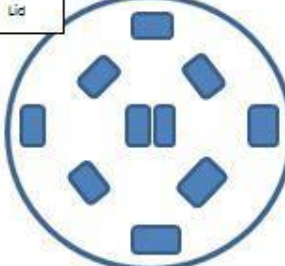

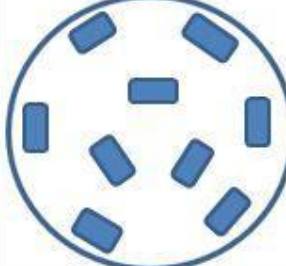
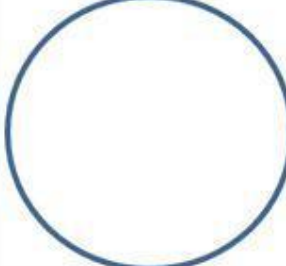
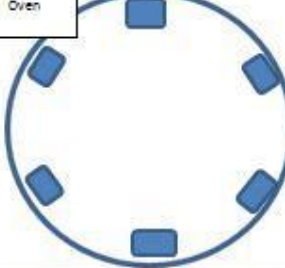
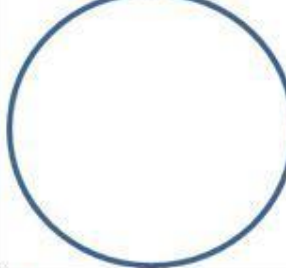
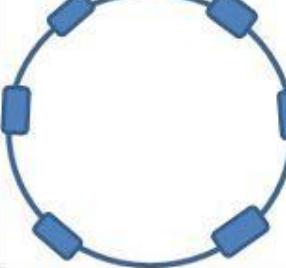

Oven top/bottom	325°	350°	375°	400°	425°	450°
8"	15	16	17	18	19	20
*****	10/5	11/5	11/6	12/6	13/6	14/6
10"	19	21	23	25	27	29
*****	13/6	14/7	16/7	17/8	18/9	19/10
12"	23	25	27	29	31	33
*****	16/7	17/8	18/9	19/10	21/10	22/11
14"	30	32	34	36	38	40
*****	20/10	21/11	22/12	24/12	25/13	26/14

Servings Per Dutch Oven- These are approximate as some people can eat more than others but they do serve as an aid:

Oven Size	Persons Served
8"	1-2
10"	4-7
12"	12-14
12"deep	16-20
14"	16-20
14"deep	22-28

Baking temperatures taken from regular cookbooks, sometimes refer to Slow, Moderate, Hot, or Very Hot ovens. Those terms normally reflect following temperatures; Slow-250° to 350°; Moderate-350° to 400°; Hot-400° to 450°; Very Hot-450° to 500°.

Here is a coal arrangement chart.

<p>2/3 top & 1/3 bottom Top coals spread evenly, bottom coals near outer edge of oven.</p>	<p>All coals on lid. Spread evenly across the lid.</p>	<p>2/3 Top & 1/3 Bottom Spread mostly around outside and a few coals in the middle</p>	<p>All coals on bottom. Spread evenly across the bottom of oven</p>
<p>Lid</p> 			
<p>All Purpose oven</p>	<p>Broiling</p>	<p>Baking</p>	<p>Frying or Simmering</p>
<p>Oven</p> 			
<p>2/3 Top & 1/3 Bottom. (near outer edge)</p>	<p>All coals on Lid</p>	<p>2/3 Top spread evenly and 1/3 Bottom spread around the outer edge.</p>	<p>All coals on bottom, spread evenly across the bottom</p>

Now Yer Cookin!

So you have your Dutches cooking and now go crack a cold one and sit in the shade....NOT! This is not the Popeil Pocket Fisherman....there is no set it and forget it.

TEND YOUR FOOD! A Dutch must be kept an eye on. During the cooking time, say your dish is 90 minutes. You need to rotate the lid, every 15 minutes. This keeps the radiated heat even. The rotation is 90 degrees to the right and then 15 min later, 90 degrees to the left, back to zero so to speak.

Check your food by removing the lid as little as possible. Removing the lid is just like opening the oven at home, only now you may get an ash reward....

Watch the coals. If you are cooking long enough, some coals will start to lose their heat and turn to ash. Remember that it's an oven and we need STEADY, EVEN Heat. So start some coals in the chimney about 15 min before you need to replenish them. You will need to add coals if your cooking time is more than 45-60 min total. Add them equally on the top and bottom. So if you replace on the bottom, do one on the top as well even if it does not need it.

Dutch cooking is not tough to do, just remember, it's only an oven! So dish it up and enjoy.

Cleanup, that Ugly Word;

Now that you are stuffed, someone has to do the cleanup. I never use soap on my Dutch unless I am going to re-season it, and I don't like to do that over and over again. So I generally put some water in the oven while I still have some coals left, or will start some new and let it get hot. If you seasoned the oven right, you will only need a scrub brush to loosen the left overs and rinse it out. You can spray it with Apple Cider Vinegar which will cut some stubborn food and does kill bacteria. Once clean, let it dry COMPLETELY. I only put away a wet Dutch once, you won't let that happen twice.

With the oven dry, put very light coat of veg oil on the inside including the lid and it's ready to store in a cool, dark, dry place. You will need to put either folded paper towels, or a small handtowel between the lid and oven to keep air from being trapped. This is the single largest reason for a rancid oven. So store it right and you will be rewarded.

Resources;

There are numerous books, Lodge makes books and there are many recipe books you can find out, just Google it and you will find plenty.

However, there is one person who got me enthused to use a Dutch, that person is CEE DUB. He had a Dutch oven show on PBS for years and it was fantastic. Cee Dub was a game warden in Idaho for 30 years and did tons of cooking for hunt, fish and wildlife trips. He has a website and his books and videos are outstanding. I suggest you give him a try!

Some Helpful Hints

- NEVER put any cold liquid into a hot oven, it will crack.
- Treat every part of the oven as if it is hot, they hold heat for a long time.
- Keep it clean, dry and open to air.
- Do not use soap to clean the oven unless you intend to re-season it.
- No standing water in the oven, it can rust.
- Do not store oven with the lid closed all the way, it needs to breathe.
- Do not store oven with a coating of lard or tallow. It will go rancid.



Good Cooking

Vic Bausell