

Care for Cast Iron Dutch Ovens

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Cast iron dutch ovens have a hardened coating on them called “seasoning” that is made by baking on (“polymerizing”) oil or lard until it leaves a smooth, hard finish. Good seasonings make excellent durable, non-stick surfaces but good practices and care is required! Seasonings are NOT a build up of food over time.

Use and care for the dutch oven

1. For easy clean up, double-line the inside of the pan/oven with heavy-duty aluminum foil. Press the foil firmly and neatly to the sides so that it does not tear when using utensils.
2. Use of metal utensils is acceptable but can damage the seasoning, use with caution.
3. Acidic foods (such as tomato sauces) may attack the seasoning, so beware that the oven may need re-seasoning.
4. **After use, clean as soon as possible. Remove foil immediately after use.**
5. To clean, simply use hot water and scrub with a sponge. **Do not use soap.** Do not scrape with metal utensils.
6. If the surface will not clean with hot water & sponge, you may need to be more aggressive. **You MUST remove ALL food matter leave a clean surface** but the idea is to not damage (remove) any more of the seasoning as is necessary. *Gently* scrub the trouble spot with a used nylon scrub pad. A new scrub pad is too rough. If this does not work, scrub a little harder until the surface is clean and smooth. If necessary, use a new scrub pad. If the seasoning is not stripped to the bare metal, then it is still usable as is.
7. If it is stripped to the bare metal, the pan should be reseasoned. Otherwise the bare spots will rust and cause problems during cooking and cleaning.

Re-seasoning a dutch oven

1. Re-season both the inside and the outside, but be particular about the cleanliness and quality of the inside, the lip, and the underside of the lid. The existing seasoning does not need to be removed. Do the entire dutch oven even if only part is of the seasoning is damaged.
2. Use hot water and a used scrub pad to remove all rough spots, food build up, burnt on food, or seasoning that is flaking off or rough. If necessary, increase the abrasiveness to an unused pad. In extreme cases sandpaper may even be required. **Soap is not recommended**, even for reseasoning preparation, as the bare surface is porous and the soap may be difficult to rinse out. Soap may also attack the seasoning. Clean the outside as well (level of cleanliness not as critical).
3. Rinse the surface thoroughly with warm or hot water, wipe off, then heat in an oven at 200F-250F to dry thoroughly. Allow to cool enough for handling.
4. Using a lint-free cloth that will not leave fibers, wipe all iron surfaces with a thin coating of a neutral cooking oil (canola for example). The steel handle does not need to be done.
5. Starting with a cold or warm oven (not hot), heat the oven, legs up, at 400 F for approximately one hour in a propane grill (grill lid closed) on low or indoor oven. Smoking will likely occur, so turn the oven fan on. Do the lid as well. Since propane grills are inexact in temperature, the time or heat level may need to be adjusted. An oven thermometer is useful.
6. Check after 30-45 minutes for color. After 1 hr. at 400F the dutch oven should appear a very dark brown or nearly black, and there should be minimal smoke in the oven. If only light brown to brown, continue bake.
7. Cool in the oven or grill with the lid or door closed.
8. The process of coating with oil and heating can be repeated for a thicker, more durable seasoning.