

Care of your Dutch Oven

Each patrol has the responsibility for caring for their Dutch oven. Before reading what Lodge has to say about seasoning the Dutch oven, please review some basic principals of Dutch oven care:

1. Coat the inside of the Dutch oven prior to using with a light coating of vegetable oil.
2. Never clean a Dutch oven with soap. Use only warm water.
3. After cleaning the Dutch oven, coat the inside with a light coating of vegetable oil.
4. Where Lodge refers to a "stiff brush" they do not mean a wire brush. Please use only a scouring pad like a chore girl or Scotch-Brite type scouring pad.
5. Always store the freshly oiled Dutch oven with a folded paper towel between the lid and the pot.
6. Use detergent only when preparing to re-season the Dutch oven.

Below is an extract from the Lodge Dutch oven book:

CAMP DUTCH OVEN CARE & SEASONING

Preferences on what oil, how much, how hot to make the oven, and for how long to bake the utensil are as varying as recipes for sweet tea and cornbread. One fact is quite unarguable; natural cast iron has to be seasoned before use.

Seasoning A Natural Finish Lodge Cast Iron Camp Dutch Oven

If you have a new piece of natural finish Lodge cast iron cookware, it must be "seasoned" prior to using. Seasoning is the process of vegetable oil absorbing into the pores of the iron, turning the gray Dutch oven black and slick. Here's how to do it.

1. Wash the cast iron Dutch oven with hot, soapy water and a stiff brush to remove the wax coating.
2. Rinse and dry completely.
3. Spread a thin coat of melted solid shortening or vegetable oil over the entire surface of the Dutch oven covering all interior and exterior surfaces including feet and handles.
4. Line the lower oven rack with aluminum foil (to catch drippings), and preheat the oven to 325°.
5. Place Dutch oven upside down on middle rack of oven and bake for 1 hour. Turn the oven off leaving the cookware in the oven until cool.

When finished the Dutch oven will look slightly brown (instead of black), but it is seasoned and ready to use. To turn the cookware darker you may repeat the process 2 or 3 more times.

Caring For Your Cast Iron Cookware

Properly cared for cast iron Dutch ovens will last more than a lifetime. Here are some tips on maintaining your cookware for generations to enjoy.

Cleaning

After cooking in your cast iron cookware, clean the utensil with hot water and a stiff brush. Never use harsh detergents to clean iron as it will remove the seasoning. Avoid putting hot cast iron into cold water. The resulting thermal shock can cause it to warp or crack. Towel dry your cast iron thoroughly. While the utensil is still warm from the hot water wash, immediately wipe a light coat of vegetable oil or spray on all of the interior and exterior surfaces.

Storage

Store your cast iron in a cool, dry place. If you have a lid for the utensil, place a folded paper towel between the lid and the utensil to allow air to circulate.

Metallic Taste or Signs of Rust

If you notice a metallic taste or your cookware shows signs of rust, simply wash the cookware with soap and hot water, scour off the rust, and re-season the cookware.

COMPLETE OVERHAUL

Because scouts are learning how to do Dutch oven cooking, the ovens can become overheated resulting in burnt food residue “welding” itself to the sides of the pot. It seems that no amount of scrubbing or soap will remove this baked on residue. There is a way of returning the oven to its original cast condition and restart the seasoning process all over again. When done properly and carefully, this technique will make the oven look factory fresh:

1. Set the Dutch oven (and lid if necessary) in a cold self cleaning oven.
2. Set the self cleaning feature of the oven for 2 hours.
3. At the end of the self cleaning 2 hour cycle allow the Dutch oven to slowly cool down to near room temperature with the oven door closed.
IMPORTANT: Rapid cooling may cause the iron to warp or crack like the Liberty Bell. Cooling can take 2.5 to 3 hours – please be patient.
4. Remove the warm Dutch oven from the oven and allow it to cool to room temperature. The Dutch oven will be covered with a metallic rust colored residue and ash. It will look like a new casting.
5. Place the Dutch oven in warm water and scrub the residue off the iron. This is an easy task, however the Dutch oven is now unprotected.
6. Rapid drying with a hand towel and quick application of vegetable oil will protect the Dutch oven from further rust. It will take about a quarter cup of oil. Coat everything but the handle – inside, outside, stubby little legs and the lid.
7. Immediately follow the seasoning recommendations by Lodge (above).

When you remove the Dutch oven from the oven after seasoning it will look “factory fresh”. For storage, place a folded paper towel between the lid and the pot so it can “breathe” to prevent condensation and rust from forming.