

Troop 566 Dutch Oven Cooking

June, 2002

Dutch Ovens have been in use in America since the beginning. Today's Scouts appreciate the ease of use in preparing oven baked meals in a camp environment. Scouts use charcoal to power the oven. A rule of thumb is anything you can cook at home in the 300-400 temperature range you can cook in a Dutch oven.

Dutch Ovens are found at the Scout Shop, REI, Mel Cottons, and Costco, but stock is intermittent. Most of the local stores mentioned carry only cast iron ovens. Aluminum is also available in the market (it is much lighter so you must be a little more careful with it (you can melt them if too hot) and it does not have to be seasoned to prevent rust).

The favorite cast iron brand is Lodge. The cheapest cast iron brand is Costco. For our purposes you want a tight fitting flat top lid and legs. The most common size is 12 inches (6 quarts). A deeper version is also available at the Scout Shop (12 inch/ 8 quart). Most larger sizes have to be ordered. All menus listed were cooked in the 12 inch / 6 quart size except the turkey which was cooked in the 12 inch/8 quart size.

Scouting prefers Scouts to use charcoal lighting cans (you can buy at OSH) instead of lighter fluid because it is much safer. You stick a sheet or 2 of newspaper in the bottom, fill with charcoal, and light the newspaper. However, it takes a bit longer and requires a can for each batch of charcoal. Not having enough lighting cans could cause delays if several patrols, each cooking with several ovens, fight over a limited quantity of lighting cans. Charcoal starts black and turns ash-white when it gets going. It can take 15-30 minutes for the charcoal to be fully engaged.

You will want to have some large tongs, pliers, or something to move the charcoal around and lift the lid of the oven. Use smaller tongs & pliers and you will see & smell the hair melt off your hands and arms. In the winter be careful of melting your gloves!

Timeline:

- 1) For most of the menus the first thing to do is light the charcoal. You then have at least 15 minutes to prepare. If you need more time to prepare the food than this, do it before you light the charcoal. Consider the mess the charcoal will make ahead of time. Putting some tinfoil underneath the charcoal can save ash marks on dirt or concrete.
- 2) Line the oven with tinfoil (trick to make clean up easier – however do not let the tinfoil interfere with the closing of the lid (cut tinfoil off at the top of the pot) as tinfoil tends to make the lid fit loosely (bad).
- 3) Put food into the Dutch oven. Use a meat thermometer when cooking pieces of meat (\$5 at grocery store – all metal suggested). A thermometer makes telling when the meat is ready a snap. Very objective.
- 4) Let things cook for 15 minutes before you even open the oven. The more you open the lid the slower it will cook. Good signs are sizzling noises coming from the pot. Bad signs are steam escaping (locking moisture in prevents burning).
- 5) As you get close to being done, lift the lid as necessary to check. When doing several ovens of the same meal you can learn much from the fastest cooking one and perhaps make adjustments (swapping fastest and slowest pot locations & lid OR not burning the second one).
- 6) To keep things warm, remove the bottom charcoal and $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ of the top charcoal.

MENUS

Fresh baked Cinnamon rolls for breakfast

Purchase pairs (2 cans) of Jumbo Cinnamon rolls dough from the refrigerator section of the grocery store. The jumbo size comes with 5 rolls per can. Line the Dutch oven with tin foil. Open the PopNFresh and put 10 cinnamon rolls in the bottom of the 12 inch oven. Bake 25-45 minutes as needed. Be careful not to have too many pieces of charcoal underneath the oven as this will cause a ¼ inch charcoal layer on the bottom of your rolls. It is easy to cook to perfection even by new Scouts. After cooked, you can simply grab the tin foil and remove it from the Dutch oven (but be prepared if the tinfoil fails). Let stand a few minutes and cover with the icing supplied in the PopNFresh container.

Pot Roast & Vegetables for dinner.

Purchase a 3-4 pound boneless pot roast. Cut into 4 pieces. Purchase Bernstein's Restaurant Recipe Italian Salad dressing (16oz) size in the plastic bottle. Remove half the dressing and use for salad or leave at home. Fill the other half of the bottle with sherry cooking wine. Add salt, pepper, and parsley to taste. Pour some of this special mixture in the bottom of the oven. Wipe the meat in the sauce on all 4 sides of each piece and place in the bottom of the pot with space equally around them. Add 3 medium size potatoes (peels and cut into 6 pieces each). Split 5 large carrots and cut into 2 inch long sections. Cut 1 onion into sections. Add 1 small celery stalk worth of celery in 2 inch sections. Mix vegetables up. Pour remaining sauce over vegetables and meat. Place meat thermometer into largest piece of meat. Cook for 15 minutes before checking. Plan to cook for 45 minutes, but wait until thermometer says 155-165.

Peach cobbler for dessert.

Purchase a number 10 can (3 quarts for \$3.49 at Costco) of peaches. Purchase 1 or 2 white or yellow cake mixes (get on sale). Bring a cube of margarine. Place peaches in bottom of tinfoil lined Dutch oven while holding back ¼ of the juice. Mix cake mix batter with extra peach juice in empty peach can. Spread batter over peaches. Cut slices of margarine and place over batter. Cook 25-45 minutes until cake is cooked.

Cornish game hens with stuffing, corn on the cob & cooked carrots

Purchase Cornish Game hens (think of as a tiny chicken) from Costco for \$12 for 6 birds. Buy 1 box of Stovetop stuffing for every 3 birds. Defrost all or partially before getting to camp (otherwise you will have to soak in water all afternoon). The birds should be defrosted by the start of dinner preparation. You can fit 3 birds in each 12 inch Dutch Oven. Make stovetop stuffing per directions. Stuff stuffing into each bird. Wipe vegetable oil over the outside of each bird and place in Dutch oven. The 3 birds should face the center. Place two ½ ears of corn (fresh or from frozen food aisle out of season) on end between each bird. Place 4 inch lengths of large carrots between birds. Parsley for color on top looks great. Ask mom for a little seasoning (paprika adds great color) and apply. Put meat thermometer into the thickest part of the breast meat in one bird per oven.

Other things we have done:

- Cookies
- Pizza
- Lasagna from scratch
- Stuffed cookies
- Pumpkin pies
- Meatloaf
- Blueberry muffins (from mix)

Suggestion: We suggest that our Scouts prepare the meal at home a week before the camp as a dry run. This way they can get Mom's advice and can look like a pro when they get to camp.