

Dutch Oven Hints!

Question #1:

How do you control the heat in a Dutch oven?

There are several ways to test the temperature of your Dutch oven. I will go over some of these ways, but the one main way to test the temperature is to lift the lid. If the food is not cooking enough add some heat. If it's cooking too fast take off some heat. Remember, it's much easier to raise the temperature of cast iron than to lower it.

Here is one way to test the temperature of a heated oven:

- * Place a teaspoonful of flour in a small pie pan and put the pan inside a hot Dutch oven.

- * Place the lid on the oven and leave it for 5 minutes.

If the flour has not turned brown the oven is less than 300 degrees.

- * If the flour is light brown, the oven is about 350 degrees.

- * If the flour is dark brown, the oven is about 450 degrees.

Note: If the flour is dark brown after 3 minutes, reduce the heat, the oven is too hot to cook with.

There is another good way to test the temperature. It could be called the 2-3 briquette rule. Using this rule, you take the size of the oven and place that amount of briquettes on the lid and place that amount under the oven.

Then take 2-3 briquettes from the bottom and move them to the top. This technique will maintain a temperature of 325 to 350 degrees. Refer to the table below for common oven sizes. For every 2 briquettes added or subtracted to/from this the net change is about 25 degrees.

These temperature changes are for the Rocky Mountain area, where the cooking altitude is about 4000-6000 ft. If you live in lower or higher area, check these settings with an oven thermometer to make sure they are OK. I mention this because temperatures inside a Dutch oven are effected by altitude.

There are a couple of other things to remember about temperature control.

The first is that you should rotate your oven a third of a turn every ten minutes. And then rotate the lid a third of a turn the other direction. Next if you are baking bread, rolls, or cake remove the bottom heat after two thirds of the cooking time. It will finish cooking from the top heat. This will keep it from burning on the bottom.

Use this chart as a starting point and adjust from there!

Oven size

Briquettes on top

Briquettes on bottom

8"

8 - 10

6 - 8

10" 10 - 12 8 - 10 12" 12 - 14 10 - 12 14" 14 - 16 12 - 14 16" 16 - 18 14 - 16

Question #2:

What can be cooked in a Dutch oven?

Anything that can be cooked in the oven in the kitchen at home can be cooked in a Dutch oven. And, food cooked in a Dutch oven will taste much better.

Question #3:

How do I clean my Dutch oven? I've heard you just scrape it out and turn it upside down in the fire.

That is how the early pioneers and mountain men cleaned their ovens.

A Dutch oven can be cleaned like that, but it burns out all of the seasoning.

Scrape the oven out, and boil an inch or two of water in the oven to steam it out. This also gives you time to eat with your guests.

After the oven has steamed a while, scrub it with a green scrubby pad or a soft wire kitchen brush and pour out the water. Then wipe it dry and coat it lightly with a high temperature vegetable oil while the oven is still hot. Place a wadded up newspaper or a couple of paper towels inside the oven so they hang out a little. Then place the lid on the oven and put it away. The paper helps keep the lid slightly ajar for air movement. It also collects moisture to keep the oven dry.

Question #4:

Where do I get good Dutch oven recipes?

Well, there are several answers to this question. The fastest is to cook a dish out of your favorite cookbook. Once you learn how to control the temperature, you can cook anything.

Also, there are several sites listed on the IDOS Dutch Oven Info page.

Another answer is to find someone in your area who uses a Dutch oven, such as a scout leader. Have them show you how to cook something simple. Then, practice that dish. Once you can cook it move on to something else.

If there is no one in your area, email me (idos@idos.com).

I will be glad to give you some advice.

Try this very simple recipe. Listen very close...There will be a test.

Take a 12 inch Dutch oven and put 10-12 charcoals under it.

Fill the oven with beef or pork ribs, or cut up chicken (whatever pieces you like). Pour enough barbeque sauce over the meat to cover, mustard to taste, and a cup of honey. Put the lid on and throw on about 14 to 20 briquettes on top.

Let it boil until the meat just starts to fall off the bone, probably about the time the coals give out.

There, it's done! The test is, will your family and friends eat it?

Of course, they will. You passed the test.