

## **Seasoning a Cast Iron Cooking Pot**

New cast iron, if it is not pre-seasoned prior to shipping, is typically coated in a food-grade wax or mineral oil in order to prevent rust. It is important to clean this coating off before seasoning your dutch oven. Using very hot water and washing-up liquid, scrub the inside of the pot thoroughly using a scourer or steel wool. After cleaning it is perfectly suitable to use as it is, however we recommend you follow the following information.

To season, or 'cure', the pot for camp cooking, first heat it, along with the lid. When it is hot use a cloth or clean rag to apply a light coating of fat to the inside surface of the pot and lid. Optimally, choose lard, bacon grease or shortening for this, though any oil high in saturated fat should achieve a good result. It is best to avoid butter and vegetable oil for curing, however, as these can leave the surface sticky.

Preheat your oven to between 200°C - 300°C and place a baking tray or layer of foil at the bottom, to catch any drips from the pan. Put the cookware upside-down on to the shelf, enabling any excess oil to run off during the process, and leave it there for 2 hours.

When the two hours are up, switch the oven off and allow the pan to cool where it is. Once it is cold, begin the process again. Ideally, the pan should be seasoned several times; the more it is seasoned the smoother (and therefore more non-stick) the pan's surface will become. At all stages remember the pot will be very hot so be careful not to burn yourself.

It is possible to season a pan on an open fire or outdoor barbecue grill, if required. To use a charcoal grill, coat the pan as described above, then place it, lid on, onto the grill until the coals burn out. For a gas barbecue, set the temperature as you would an oven, and leave the closed pot on top for 2 hours, before allowing to cool undisturbed. Over an open fire, the same process may be observed, however, be sure to turn the pot over as necessary in order to ensure that heat is applied evenly to the entire pan.

Excess fat will pool and leave a sticky residue (this is prevented by curing the pot upside down). If this occurs, scrape the residue away and, applying another coating of grease to the area, reseason the pan.

Properly cared for cast iron is extremely durable and should not rust, however, it is very important to maintain it correctly. Avoid soaking the pan, or leaving water in it, as this will cause the seasoning to break down. Likewise, ensure that it is thoroughly dried before storing your pan and, if possible, leave the lid off while it is unused. Leaving cooked food and storing food on your pan will also damage the seasoning. Unless you use your griddle daily, it should be cleaned with soapy water after use, as any excess oil left on the griddle will become rancid. Never put seasoned cast iron in the dishwasher.

Should your griddle develop rust spots, scour the rusty area with steel wool until the rust is removed and reseason the griddle.