Campfire Cooking and Crafts for Counselors and Kindred Spirits

Projects:

Foil and Dutch Oven Cooking over the fire

Concrete Leaves

Twig Wreath

Gourd Birdhouse

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Campfire Cooking

Planning, cooking and eating meals together can be a most enjoyable experience, especially when it's done around a campfire. These notes will help you prepare food safely for a pleasant outdoor cooking experience.

Dutch Oven Cooking:

Dutch oven cooking is one of the oldest and most popular types of cooking in the outdoors. A Dutch oven is a heavy cast iron metal pot with a lid and can be utilized in a variety of cooking methods such as frying, baking, boiling, roasting and stewing. Dutch Ovens are also available in aluminum and other materials. These notes will refer specially to cast iron Dutch Ovens.

Seasoning:

A new Dutch oven must be seasoned before its first use. Seasoning fills and seals the pores and over time helps flavor the food. A well seasoned Dutch oven develops a patina and acts almost like a Teflon coating. New Dutch ovens come with a protective coating and this coating must be removed before seasoning. Rinse the oven in hot water rubbing it with a sponge. Dry thoroughly.

Using a paper towel, coat the oven and lid, inside and out with a small quantity of vegetable oil or Crisco. Wipe out the excess. Put the Dutch oven and lid in an oven upside down so that any excess oil will drip out. Set the oven for 350 degrees and bake for 1-2 hours. Turn off the oven and do not open the door. Allow it to cool slowly.

If you purchase a new Dutch Oven, read the manufactured directions carefully. Many DO now come with a "seasoning" already on the oven so you can skip this step of seasoning the oven yourself. Even if a new oven comes with a "seasoning", it will improve with time as you use your Dutch Oven. A tip: the first few times you use a new DO, cook foods with a high oil content; this will help to establish a good patina.

Cleaning:

The ideal time to clean a DO is while it is still very warm. By placing some clean water in the warm oven and letting it sit for a few minutes, (while you are enjoying your food) you'll be able to wipe away most "stuck on" food easily. Ideally you do not want to use a scratch pad or other abrasive cleaners to clean your oven after cooking as it will wear away your seasoning.

Also ideally; you do not want to use soap of any kind to clean a DO, as small traces of the soap may remain in the oven. A well-seasoned DO will wipe clean with a paper towel, much like wiping out a Teflon pot. After cleaning and rinsing, allow the oven to air dry. Apply a thin coating of oil to both the inside and outside of the oven and the top and underside of the lid. Allow the oven to cool completely. If you do not oil the outside of the oven, then with use, the protective barrier will break down and the oven will start

to rust. As a suggestion, it is a good idea to keep a scrubber for cast iron and never use it with soap.

Dutch Oven Tools:

Lid lifter, claw hammer or pliers
Whisk broom
Tongs
Chimney charcoal starter, newspaper
Cooling rack
Long leather gloves
Cutting board
Utensils
Paper Towels
Aluminum Foil
Vegetable Oil

Temperature Control:

Controlling the temperature of a Dutch oven is relatively easy to do using charcoal briquettes. However the Dutch is designed to be hung over open flames, placed on the ground over coals or buried underground in coals.

If you are frying or boiling foods, most of the heat should come from the bottom. If you are baking, then most of the heat should be from the top. A general rule of thumb to remember is “Three Up-Three Down”. Adjust the number of coals on top and bottom of the Dutch oven according to its size. For example, a 12 inch Dutch oven needs 15 coals on the lid and 9 coals underneath to maintain a temperature of approximately 350F. Or just remember to take the size of the Dutch oven in inches, double the number, and use that many total briquettes. So, for a 12" oven you would use 24 briquettes, for a 14" oven you would use 28 briquettes, etc. Other factors such as ambient air temperature, humidity, and altitude, all influence how much heat is generated by burning briquettes. Also note that in windy conditions briquettes will burn faster due to the increased air flow around them, so they will not last as long.

Heat placement around the Dutch oven is crucial to yield the best cooking results. Briquettes placed under the oven should be arranged in a circular pattern no less than 1/2" from the outside edge of the oven. Briquettes placed on the lid should be spread out in a checkerboard pattern. Try to avoid bunching the briquettes as this causes hot spots.

For food you wish to simmer such as soups, stews, and chili; place 1/3 of the total briquettes on the lid and 2/3 under the oven.

For food you wish to bake such as breads and rolls, biscuits, cakes, pies and cobblers (rising); place 2/3 of the total briquettes on the lid and 1/3 underneath the oven.

For food you wish to roast such as meats, poultry, casseroles, quiche, vegetables, and cobblers (non-rising); use an even distribution of briquettes on the lid and underneath the oven.

"Stacking" your Dutch ovens is a convenient way to save space and share heat. Stacking is best done when ovens need the same amount of heat on top and bottom. Do not mix and match ovens that require different amounts of heat on top and bottom. Placing an oven with a cake, pie, or rolls in it, on top of an oven loaded with coals on the lid is not a very good idea.

Sizes And Capacities Of Dutch Ovens

Oven Size	Oven Capacity	Weight	Types Of Dishes
8"	2 Quarts	11 lbs.	Side dishes, vegetables, desserts.
10"	4 Quarts	15 lbs.	Side dishes, vegetables, beans, small roast, desserts.
12"	6 Quarts	20 lbs.	Roasts, poultry, fish, stews, potatoes, beans, rolls, breads, and desserts.
14"	8 Quarts	26 lbs.	Larger roasts, poultry, stews, potatoes, rolls, breads, and desserts.
16"	12 Quarts	32 lbs.	Large quantities of meat, stews, potatoes, rolls, breads, and desserts.

With so many sizes and shapes of Dutch ovens to pick and choose from, selecting the right oven is a big key to cooking great food. Shorter standard ovens spread heat to the center of the oven faster than deeper ovens so they are good for cooking foods that need higher temperatures. Deep Dutch ovens on the other hand are ideal for cooking foods at lower temperatures or where you want to control the amount of heat on top of the oven for things such as rolls and bread where you want even browning. The oven size in inches (diameter and depth) will determine how much room you have for your food

Cast Iron No No's

1. Never, and I repeat, **NEVER** allow cast iron to sit in water or allow water to stand in it. It will rust despite a good coating.
2. Never use soap on cast iron. The soap will get into the pores of the metal and won't come out very easy, but will return to taint your next meal. If soap is used accidentally, the oven should be re-seasoned, including removal of the present coating.
3. Do not place an empty cast iron pan or oven over a hot fire. Aluminum and many other metals can tolerate it better but cast iron will crack or warp, ruining the metal.
4. Do not get in a hurry to heat cast iron, you will end up with burnt food or a damaged oven or pan.
5. Never put cold liquid into a very hot cast iron pan or oven. They will crack on the spot!

Dutch Oven Recipes

Beaver Patrol Saturday Breakfast*

1 pound uncooked pork sausage
(Use spicy sausage if like a spicier breakfast)
1 cup chopped green onions
1, 4 oz can mushrooms with stems and pieces drained and chopped
2 medium tomatoes diced
2 cups shredded Colby or mozzarella cheese
1 cup original-type pancake mix
1 dozen large eggs
1 cup milk
1 teaspoon ground oregano
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper

Use a 12 inch Dutch Oven and a large size mixing bowl.

1. Brown sausage in Dutch Oven, then drain grease. Crumble sausage.
2. Mix sausage, onions, mushrooms, and tomatoes in greased oven.
3. Gently blend cheese throughout the mixture.
4. In a large size bowl, whisk together the pancake mix, eggs, milk, oregano, salt and pepper, then pour the batter over the sausage mixture in the oven.
5. Heat using 8 briquettes under the oven and 17 coals on the lid. Bake for 35 minutes or until the top of the breakfast mix is firm and lightly browned.

*From Todd Campbell, Idaho Falls in *The Scouts Outdoor Cookbook by Christine & Tim Conners.*

Denny's Dutch Oven Pineapple Cake

1 (18.5oz) package yellow cake mix
1/3 cup vegetable oil
3 eggs
1 (20oz) can crushed pineapple
½ cup butter
1 cup brown sugar
1 (20 oz) can sliced pineapple

Use 12 inch Dutch Oven and 1 gallon size plastic bag or a mixing bowl.

1. Pour cake mix, begetable oil, eggs and crushed pineapple, wth its juice, into a gallon size ziplock bag. Knead to break egg yokes and to thoroughly mix batter together. If alittle more liquied is required, use some of the juice from the can of pineapple slices.
2. Prepare 23 coals. Arrange 7 of the briquettes under the Dutch Oven.
3. Melt butter in the oven and stir in brown sugar, making sure that the bottom is covered.
4. Arrange pineapple slices over the buttered sgar.
5. Pour cake batter over the slices.
6. Place 16 briquettes on the lid. Bake for 35-35 minutes until cake is ligtly browned on top, and a toothpick or fork inserted pulls clean out of the dough.

From Denny Elliott, Dublin, Ohio Simon Kenton Council, Boy Scouts of America in *The Scouts Outdoor Cookbook by Christine & Tim Conners.*

Foil Cooking

Basics

Food can be cooked in foil packs through steaming, by making a pack that is well sealed and therefore airtight. There a couple ways to make packs: flat packs, tent pack, or 2-handled packs. Foil can also be used to make "pans" or griddles for frying, sautéing or crisping. Choose the type of cooking method based on how you would like the texture of your food. Packs are good for cooking vegetables, fish, etc. Making a pan is good for food that you want to brown or crisp.

Flat Pack

Tent Pack

2-Handle Pack

Use heavy-duty foil. This is probably not the foil you purchase for typical kitchen use, though it is readily available. If all you have is regular weight foil, use 2 or 3 layers of regular foil.

Most recipes will give an approximate cooking time which you can use as a guide, but cooking time will vary depending on your heat source (coals, wood), the quantity of food, and the temperature of the ingredients when you start.

To be safe when cooking meats you should use a meat thermometer to check for doneness. You can easily look up the USDA recommendation for minimum internal temperature when cooking meat. For example: Pork should have an internal temp of 160° (170° would be safe for any meat you cook).

A more frequent problem often encountered when cooking with foil is how to prevent overcooking or burning your food. The first method of preventing overcooking or burning is to turn and/or move your packs frequently. You may need to move your packs to less hot areas of the coals.

Another method to help prevent burning of tender foods is to double wrap the pack with newspaper. Make the food pack as usual, then wrap the pack in 2-3 layers of newspaper, then wrap the newsprint layer in foil and place on the coals as usual.

A third method to help prevent foods from burning is to cook meats along with vegetables with high water content such as mushrooms, peppers, or onions.

It may be necessary to open a foil pack and check food for doneness. However, it is often difficult to re-seal a pack once you've opened it. A pack can be opened part way, forming it into a bowl shape, to check for food doneness and then, if needed, continue cooking in a foil bowl shape for a short time.

Shiny versus dull side of the foil? There really is not enough of a difference in the way the foil functions during cooking to worry about using the shiny side versus the dull side of the foil.

Tools needed:

Heavy duty foil

Long Tongs: to handle and turn packs

Potholders/Oven Mitts: to handle hot packs. Long leather gloves designed for grilling or welding also make good hand protection for campfire cooking.

Optional: an old grill grate is handy to support heavy foil packs over the coals.

Time to eat!: If you plan to eat directly out of the foil pack, which is a great way to avoid additional dishes or trash, consider using the double pack/paper in- between method. By unwrapping and recycling the outer layer of foil, you'll have a clean (charcoal free) pack to eat from.

Use caution when unwrapping your hot pack, there will plenty of hot steam…..and delicious food!

Foil Recipes

Barbequed Chicken

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
1 cup barbeque sauce
1 15 oz can whole kernel corn, drained
½ cup green (or orange or red) pepper, diced

Cut 4 pieces of heavy-duty foil, each large enough to wrap around one chicken breast plus vegetables. Spray the foil with nonstick vegetable spray. Set 1 chicken break half on each piece of foil. Spread about ¼ cup barbeque sauce on top of each chicken breast half. Put each portions of the drained corn and green pepper on top of sauce. Wrap foil in a tent around each serving.

Foiled Beef Fajitas

1 lb boneless beef sirloin steak
1 package fajita seasoning, about 1.5 oz
2 peppers slices, green, orange, red, yellow or a combination
1 medium onion, sliced
1-2 Tablespoons olive oil

Flour tortillas, (warm in a foil wrap if desired)

Directions:
Slice beef into thin strips. In a medium bowl or plastic bag; mix fajita seasoning and beef, let marinate in the refrigerator for 1-2 hours, stir if possible.

Cut an 18" square of heavy duty foil. Place the sliced peppers and onions on the foil and drizzle with the olive oil. Discard the excess marinade and place the beef strips in a single layer on top of the vegetables. Wrap the foil, making a tent pack. Cook for approximately 20 mintues, turning as needed. When done, spoon the hot beef mixture into warm tortillas, roll and eat.

Other Foil Cooking Techniques and Recipes

Foil is also a great tool to create other appealing food cooked over coals or a wood fire. In most cases the foil is used as described above to create a pan or dish for cooking or warming foods to the desired level of doneness.

Bananas Boats

Ingredients: Bananas, Plus filler ingredients of your choice; examples; Peanut butter, Mini-marshmallows, Chocolate chips, peanuts, coconut, etc.
Equipment: Campfire, Tin foil, Tongs, Knife
Instructions: With a knife, cut a 3/4 inch "V" shaped channel into the top (inner part of curve) of the banana and remove about 13 of the banana's flesh.
Place your choice of ingredients in the cavity you've created in the banana. Replace slice of flesh, so that banana is stuffed. Wrap foil, arranging the foil to help the banana sit upright (like a boat). Set the banana boat into the fire for about five minutes. Remove with tongs. Slice through tin foil on "top" of banana, and peel foil back. Enjoy

Stuffed Apples

Ingredients: 1 apple, brown sugar, raisins, bit of butter, cinnamon
Equipment: Hot coals work best, aluminum foil
Instructions: Core the apple and stuff with Brown sugar, cinnamon, raisins, and butter. Wrap in 2 layers of foil (be sure it's sealed well) bury under a bed of hot coals. Wait a few minutes and unwrap and eat.

Portions of this document were originally created by Jayne Roth, Wood County Extension Educator. Additions were made by Christy Leeds and Katie Feldhues.

Resources and Websites of Interest:

Roughing It Easy, Thomas. The Dian Thomas Company, Salt Lake City, UT. ISBN: 0-9621257-3-3

The Dutch Oven Resource, Duffin. Camp Chef, Logan, UT. ISBN: 0-9709757-1-6

Fix It In Foil, CQ Products, 2007, G & R Publishing, ISBN: 978-1-56383-260-4

The Scouts Outdoor Cookbook. Christine & Tim Connors, Falcon Guides, ISBN: 978-0-7627-4067-3

http://papadutch.home.comcast.net

Making a Gourd Birdhouse

Preparing the gourd

Soak the gourd in a bleach solution for 15 minutes to soften the crusty skin, mold, etc that has dried on the outer surface of the gourd. Soak the gourd in a 5 gallon bucket or other container large enough to submerge the gourd. Place a heavy object gently onto the gourd to keep it submerged if needed.

Wearing protective gloves, lift the gourd partially out of the bucket and use steel wool to scrub the exterior of the gourd clean and smooth. For stubborn spots you may need to resubmerge/soak the gourd occasionally.

Handle the gourd gently while cleaning, it is possible to crack it. Always were rubber gloves if using a bleach solution.

Making an Entrance hole for the bird*

For an entrance, using an expansion bit or hole saw, cut a hole* slightly above the center of the gourd. Clean out the inside of the gourd using a serrated knife to break up the pith and seeds. To hang the gourd drill two 1/4 inch-diameter holes at the stem end for the hanger. You can then use a piece of rigid wire (such as a coat hanger) or a strip of rawhide as the hanger.

Drill four or five holes in the bottom, approximately 3/8 inch using a drill bit, and possibly 2 or 3, 3/8 inch holes on the sides for drainage and ventilation. The gourd is now ready for finishing.

Finishing

The outside of the gourd may be finished in several ways. One option is with an oil based primer, followed by enamel paint. If you want to paint; lightly sand first with fine sandpaper so the primer adheres well to the surface of the gourd. For a more natural look, just use 2 - 3 coatings of clear polyurethane directly on the gourd. Stains can also be used, prior to polyurethane step.

Determining the size of entrance hole

*The size of the gourd and the size of the entrance will determine the type of birds that will use the gourd for their home. **The distance from the ground will also determine what type of birds will use the gourd for their home.

Bird Species	Diameter of Hole	Height above Ground
	(inches)	(feet)
Bluebird	1-1/2"	5-10
Chickadee	1-1/8"	6-15
Titmouse	1-1/4"	6-15
Nuthatch	1" - 1-1/4"	6-10
Bewick's Wren	1-1/4"	6-10
Carolina Wren	1-1/2"	6-10
Swallow	1-1/2"	10-15
Downy Woodpecker	1-1/4"	6-20

Hairy Woodpecker	1-1/2"	12-20
Purple Martin	special crescent	12-20
Crested Flycatcher	2"	8-20
Flicker	2-1/2"	6-20
Red-Headed Woodpecker	2"	12-20
Barn Swallow	OPEN SIDES	8-12
Phoebe	OPEN SIDES	8-12
Robin	OPEN SIDES	6-15

Do you know why there are no perches on the gourd birdhouse?
Birds do not need a perch to enter the nest, they have such precise flying skills that they can land on the edge of the entrance opening. A perch would be an invitation for other predator birds to enter the nest. Therefore you do not need a perch.

Reference: This information is adapted from www.amishgourd.com.

There are many similar sources of information available online. See examples below:

http://www.diynetwork.com/how-to/how-to-make-a-gourd-bird-house/index.html

http://www.instructables.com/id/Making-Gourd-Birdhouses/

Twig Wreath Project

Supplies needed:
About 80 twigs, 4-6 inches long. Number needed will vary based on size of wreath form
Dried flowers or other decorative stems, 12-16
Small rubber bands
Green floral wire, on a roll
Scissors
Hand pruning shears
Wire wreath form or piece of wire to form a circle

Steps

1. **Select a wire wreath form about 14-16 inches in diameter. Wire wreath forms are readily available at craft stores and online.**

   Another option is to use a piece of stiff wire, like a coat hanger, to form a circle.

2. **Collect twigs: This is the fun part! Walk the woods or park and collect twigs about the size of a pencil in diameter (some bigger some smaller is okay). Look for twigs with interesting crocks, forks, etc. You'll need about 80 twigs.**

3. **Assemble the twigs in bunches. Make bundles of about 5-6 twigs and one dried decorative stem. Secure each bundle with a rubber band around one end. Make about 16 bundles**

4. **Attach bundles to the wreath form. Start by securing the end of the florist wire to the wreath form. Lay a bundle on the form and wrap with wire to secure. Lay the next twig bundle onto the form, overlapping the first to hide the rubber bands. Work around the wreath form overlapping bundles until entire form is covered. If there are places where the rubber band shows, poke in additional decorative stems to hide them.**

5. **Make a loop of floral wire and attach to the wreath frame for hanging.**

Leaf Stepping Stone

Our Basic Stepping Stone Recipe

- Portland Cement
- Water
- Sand
- A large or small leaf as your mold
- Release Agent (We use Pam)

Instructions

- Find a comfortable work area, either a table or ground. Place a trash bag or tarp down for your sand mounds.
- Get about half a five gallon bucket filled with sand (with no huge rocks). Place the sand from the bucket onto your work area. Work the sand into a mound or pile with the proper shape you desire for your leaf.
- Take a large mixing bucket and place two cups of cement in it. Add in some sand and then pour one cup of water into the bucket. Mix all of the ingredients until it forms a thick paste.
  Make sure to wear gloves as the cement mixture can crack your skin
- Select a large or small leaf (Common ones are hosta, rhubarb, or monster). Place the leaf face down onto the sand mound and adjust the sand mound to your desired look for your leaf. It doesn't matter but make sure the sand mound fits under the leaf enough to support the cement.

- Now spray the backside of the leaf while it's face down on the sand mound with cooking spray or any other cooking spray. This prevents the leaf and cement from sticking to each other once they dry.
- Put some gloves on (Latex or rubber - anything that you can easily move your hands around in). Next, grab a handful of cement and roll it into a ball. Then place it at the stem or base of the leaf. Repeat this process about 3-4 more times to ensure a strong base for your leaf. Once you have completed that, you can start making more handfuls and placing them down the spine of the leaf or fan them out from the stem. You want about an inch thickness of cement on top of the leaf.
  - Make sure to leave about a ½ inch from the edge of the leaf, because once you have the thickness then you can smooth it out towards the edge.

- Once you have covered your leaf completely, you can place your initials on the backside with a pencil or toothpick. Then let the leaf set overnight. Check the next day, to see how dry the cement is and if it's dry enough pull off the leaf and pick up your new leaf stepping stone.
    - Optional: You can use a wire brush to scrape away the sand bits or smooth out the surface of your leaf.
- **Painting option:** You must place your leaf stepping stone in a safe spot and wait an additional week. Once the time is up, acrylic paints can be used to decorate your leaf.

References:

http://alternative-energy-gardning.blogspot.ca/2013/06/how-to-make-leaf-stepping-stones.html

http://www.marthastewart.com/264289/cement-leaves