

Scout's Guide to Beginning Dutch Oven Cooking

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Prolog

Biscuits, scones, pancakes, cornbread, pizza, chicken, roast beef, cobbler, cakes, ... Are you hungry yet? This Dutch Oven cooking book is intended for Boy Scouts 11 years of age and up to use in making a few simple camp meals. With that goal in mind, the emphasis will be on how to cook with and take care of a Dutch Oven, **and** on how to successfully cook breakfast, lunch, dinner and dessert in this versatile appliance.

Cooking with a Dutch Oven

Let's first state the obvious. A Dutch Oven is **not** for use on backpacking adventures (unless your trip includes mules to carry heavy items). However, a Dutch Oven is perfect for the many base-camping opportunities that a troop has where the Scouts don't camp far from the vehicles that brought them to the campout.

There are, in general, four ways to use a Dutch oven:

1. Like an oven at home, using cake pans or other oven-ready pans raised up on a rack or on metal stakes inside the oven to keep the pans from having much direct contact with the oven.
2. Like a large cook pot. Pre-heat the oven to kill germs, before putting any food into it, and/or line the inside with Extra Heavy-Duty Aluminum foil. Coat the bottom and sides of the oven with oil or grease where any food will be in contact with it, to avoid sticking and to minimize clean-up. Make sure that the foil doesn't touch the lid, so that the lid still fits tightly.
3. Use the inside of the lid of the Dutch Oven as a griddle. Pre-heat and clean the lid to kill germs. Keep the lid well oiled during cooking.
4. Like a deep fat fryer. Great for cooking donuts, and other fried foods. Not suggested for younger Scouts, due to safety concerns with hot grease.

Where to put the Charcoal

The number of coals to put under the Dutch Oven, and to put on top of the lid depends on what kind of dish you are preparing. When cooking breads or cobblers, you want to have the coals mostly on top of the lid, so that the bread or cake doesn't burn on the bottom. This will also be a good rule for any other kind of dish that doesn't have very much moisture in it. The more moisture that a food has, and the more density that the food has, the more coals should be under the oven, so that the meats or stews, for instance, cook fully. The recipes below give you an estimate of how many coals to put where.

Handling a Dutch Oven

Two important pieces of equipment are indispensable when handling the hot, heavy iron of a Dutch Oven. 1. Dutch Oven pliers (Or at least channel-lock pliers) and 2. Leather gloves. Given only one item, the Dutch Oven pliers are indispensable for both carrying a hot oven and handling the hot lid.

Cleaning a Dutch Oven

The easiest way to clean a Dutch Oven is to not get it dirty to begin with. If possible, even when food is cooked in a separate pan, line the inside of the Dutch Oven with aluminum foil. If food is cooked directly in the Dutch Oven, then use Extra Heavy-Duty aluminum foil so that the foil won't easily rip. If all of this prevention fails to keep the Dutch Oven unsoiled, or if the cooking juices or dirt get on any part of the metal then it must be cleaned.

Cleaning a Dutch Oven has one large don't...**DON'T** use Soap. First wipe out as much residue as possible, with paper towels, for instance. Scrub and rinse the inside surfaces with clean water (remember, no soap). When all of the dirt and residue has been removed, or is so cooked-on that it cannot come off by simple scrubbing, put the lid back on the Dutch Oven and put them over a bed of hot coals and put hot coals on top of the lid. Leave it in the coals for at least 15 minutes. This final heating process does two things: it disinfects the oven, and it turns remaining residue into clean ash. After the oven cools from the coals, one final wipe of the inside with a clean paper towel to remove ashes makes it ready for its next use.

If a Dutch Oven is new, or if a used oven is washed with soap by mistake, then you must *season* the metal. For new ovens, follow the directions on the box. To season a Dutch Oven in camp, wipe shortening (or cooking oil, if no shortening is available) lightly, and evenly on all surfaces of the clean oven (don't forget the lid). Put the lid slightly ajar on the oven, put the oven over ~7 hot coals, and put ~7 coals on top of the Dutch Oven. Heat for an hour or more. After cooling, gently wipe the inside surfaces where any oil remains pooled and make sure that all surfaces are coated with the oil. Your Dutch Oven is now protected from rust and is ready to cook with again or to pack away for the next camping trip.

How to use this guide

Use this *Scout's Guide to Beginning Dutch Oven Cooking* for a few menu ideas and cooking tips to get you started with recipes that have a high likelihood of success. When in camp, use your creativity to add gourmet flourishes, or to substitute for recipe items that you don't have. There are always premixed supermarket versions of most of these foods, but I hope that you try your hand at a few of the "scratch" recipes. They're fun, they're easy, and they taste great. Once you feel comfortable preparing these dishes, then move on to more complicated Dutch Oven meals of your own design.

“What’s for Breakfast?”

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A long day of hiking or camp activities must be started with a meal that “sticks to your ribs.” Here are a few ideas for using a Dutch Oven at breakfast-time.

Pancakes (?)

Yes, pancakes. For pancakes, use just the lid of the Dutch Oven turned upside down (inside up) over a bed of coals (no flames). The griddle should be hot enough to make a drop of water skitter on the surface. To save time and mess at camp, you can premix dry ingredients before you leave home and put them into a ziplock bag. OIL THE LID before ladling any batter onto it! Keep the batter a little thick, since the lid isn't flat. This recipe makes about nine pancakes. *Add blueberries or other fruit for a gourmet flair.*

In a bowl or pitcher, beat the following ingredients with a hand beater, or wire whisk:

- 1 egg
- ¾ Cup milk
- 2 Tablespoons vegetable oil (or melted shortening or melted margarine)

Beat these dry ingredients into the mixture until completely smooth and fluffy:

- 1 Cup *all-purpose* flour
- 1 Tablespoon sugar
- 3 Teaspoons baking powder
- ½ Teaspoon salt

Biscuits

Preheat a Dutch Oven.

Mix dry ingredients into a large bowl. (These can be premixed at home)

- 3 Cups all-purpose flour
- 6 Teaspoons baking powder
- ½ Teaspoon salt

Mix in the following ingredients. DO NOT MIX TOO MUCH or you will have rock-hard biscuits.

- 1 Cup milk
- 6 Tablespoons vegetable oil

After mixing the biscuits, carefully roll the dough into balls and place in the bottom of the oven. Have only 4 to 5 charcoal briquettes under the Dutch Oven, and have as many briquettes on top of the oven as the number written on top of the lid (12 coals for a 12” Dutch Oven). Bake until slightly browned on top.

Scones

Preheat a Dutch Oven.

Mix dry ingredients into a large bowl. (These can be premixed at home)

- 2 Cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Tablespoon baking powder
- ¼ Teaspoon salt

Mix in the following ingredients. DO NOT MIX TOO MUCH or you will have stones, not scones. For a gourmet touch, mix in a handful Raisins or *Craisins*.

- 2/3 Cup milk
- 1 Tablespoon margarine
- 2 eggs

After mixing the biscuits, roll the dough into balls and place in the bottom of the oven. Have only 4 to 5 charcoal briquettes under the Dutch Oven, and have a few more briquettes on top of the oven than the number written on top of the lid (>12 coals for a 12” Dutch Oven). Bake until slightly browned on top.

“We want some Lunch!”

It has to be quick, and the patrol has to want to eat it. The Dutch Oven is not an oft-used appliance for most Scouts' lunch preparation, but here are some recipes for success.

Pizza (English Muffin Style)

Preheat the Dutch Oven with more coals on the lid than the number (i.e. >12 on a 12” Dutch Oven) and an equal number under the oven.

- Cut English Muffins in half (Or use a whole *Boboli* bread)
- Spread margarine on the crust side of the muffins
- Spread tomato slice or pizza sauce or spaghetti sauce or tomato paste on the top side of the muffins
- Add grated cheese (provolone or mozzarella preferred, others fine)
- Add Sliced pepperoni and/or sausage and/or sliced olives and/or leftover cooked bacon
- Bake until the cheese is melted

Wiener Wraps

Follow Biscuit directions above. *Smoosh* the biscuit mixture evenly around wieners, leaving the wieners' ends uncovered. Bake in a Dutch Oven until the biscuits are browned. An alternative is to use pre-made (e.g. Pillsbury) crescent roll dough wrapped around the wieners.

Grilled Ham and Cheese Sandwiches

Prepare the Dutch Oven lid as you did for pancakes above, to make a grill.

- Spread butter or margarine on one side of each piece of bread.
- Place Ham and Cheese slices on the **non**-buttered sides of two pieces of bread.
- Lightly brown each side of the sandwich.

Write some off your Dutch Oven cooking ideas in the space below:

“Where’s my Dinner?”

After a long day, everyone's hungry. Here are a few easy, great tasting additions to your evening meal.

Chicken and Rice

Into a prepared Dutch Oven, put the following items:

- 2 cans of Cream of Chicken Soup (spread across bottom)
- 2 soup cans of water
- 2 cups of white Rice (evenly sprinkled on top of the soup)
- 4 Chicken breasts
- 2 diced carrots
- 1 diced piece of broccoli

Cook with a few coals under the Oven (~6) and most coals on the lid (~14 on a 12” oven) to avoid overcooking the rice onto the bottom of the oven. Check often and add water if drying out.

Mexican Cornbread

This requires a very hot, **pre-heated** oven (extra coals on top, normal on bottom), and cooking must be closely watched to avoid burning.

Mix dry ingredients:

- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- ½ cup flour
- ½ Teaspoon salt
- ½ Teaspoon baking soda
- ½ Teaspoon baking powder
- 1 Tablespoon sugar

Stir in and mix well, the following ingredients:

- 1 cup milk (buttermilk or low fat preferred)
- 1 egg
- 2 Tablespoons of Finely chopped Green (or Red) Bell Peppers
- 3 Tablespoons hot bacon grease (or melted butter or margarine)

As soon as this is mixed, pour it into the hot oven and cover it. Check often. It should cook about 10 minutes or until the top becomes dull (not shiny) and the cornbread is firm.

Spicy Tostada

Brown the ground beef in a pan, chopping it into small chunks, and drain off the grease. Cover the inside of a 12" (or larger) Dutch oven with aluminum foil. Cover the bottom of the Dutch Oven with flour tortillas so that there are no spaces between any tortillas. Cover the Tortillas with a healthy coating of Picante' or Salsa (including the chunky stuff). Cover this with Shredded cheese. Sprinkle the ground beef and sliced olives on top. Broil the Dutch Oven with 5 coals under and 15 coals on top of a 12" oven. It's done baking when the cheese is melted and the tortillas are slightly browned. Cut into squares to serve.

- 1 Pound Ground Beef
- 1 jar of hot Pace © Picante' Sauce
- 1 package of shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 small package of flour tortillas
- 1 small can of sliced black olives
- Sour cream and shredded lettuce...toppings for after its served

Pot Roast

Brown the roast in a small amount of cooking oil on the bottom of the Dutch Oven. Add vegetables, broth and seasoning. Cover and cook over medium heat (~ 8 coals on top and 8 coals under) for **3 to 5 hours**. If water and juices are boiling rapidly, remove a few coals from under it. Add water if juices are drying up. Cook until the meat is cooked to the desired level of doneness. Check doneness by cutting into and revealing the center of the roast.

- 3-4 Pound rump or pot roast
- 3 potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 3 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 onions, quartered
- 1 green pepper, chopped, no seeds
- 1 can beef broth (or water)
- Salt and Pepper to personal taste

“What’s for Dessert?”

Easy Peach Cobbler

Into a cool 12” Dutch Oven, lined with Extra Heavy Duty aluminum foil dump a large can (or two small cans) of peaches in heavy syrup. Dump in one box of white cake mix (or yellow cake mix). Cut up ½ cube of margarine or butter and sprinkle on top. Cook with 6 coals under the oven and 14 coals on top until cake starts to form. Check and turn every 15 minutes. May take longer than 30 minutes. *Gourmet touches include putting in two beaten eggs, and tossing in a little vanilla pudding.*

Easy Black Forest Dump Cake

Into a cool 12” Dutch Oven, lined with Extra Heavy Duty aluminum foil, dump a can of cherry pie filling, and a quarter can of water. Dump in one box of chocolate cake mix. Cut up ½ cube of margarine or butter and sprinkle on top. Cook with 6 coals under the oven and 14 coals on top until cake starts to form. Check and turn every 15 minutes. May take longer than 30 minutes. *Gourmet touches include putting in two beaten eggs, and tossing in a little chocolate pudding.*

Silly Rabbit Cobbler

Into a cool 12” Dutch Oven, lined with Extra Heavy Duty aluminum foil, dump a can of pineapple tidbits in water. Dump in one box of lemon cake mix. Dump in one can of Mandarin oranges in light syrup. Cut up ½ cube of margarine or butter and sprinkle on top. Cook with 6 coals under the oven and 14 coals on top until cake starts to form. Check and turn every 15 minutes. May take longer than 30 minutes. Tastes a little like Trix, silly rabbit.

Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

Into a cool 12” Dutch Oven, lined with Extra Heavy Duty aluminum foil place the contents of a tall can of pineapple rings in heavy syrup in the bottom of the Dutch Oven. Dump in one box of yellow cake mix. Mix in three beaten eggs. Cut up ½ cube of margarine or butter and sprinkle on top. Sprinkle the top with brown sugar. Cook with 6 coals under the oven and 14 coals on top until cake starts forms and a fork stuck into the cake comes out clean. Check and turn often after 15 minutes.

Sugar Cookies

To make cookie dough, mix liquid ingredients together with the egg and sugar before adding the other dry ingredients. Stir until smooth. Grease a baking pan. Put a rack or metal tent stakes flat inside the Dutch oven to raise baking pan up off of the bottom. Roll cookie dough into small balls and space them out in the greased pan.

- 2/3 cup margarine
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 Teaspoon vanilla flavoring
- 1 Teaspoon lemon flavoring
- 1 egg
- 4 Teaspoons milk
- 2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 Teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 Teaspoon salt

Pre-heat and bake with 14 coals on top and 6 coals underneath. Baking time ~15 minutes.

Coffee Cake

Use a mixing bowl to prepare this batter, before pouring it into either an oiled baking pan or a cool 12” Dutch Oven lined with Extra Heavy Duty aluminum foil and oiled. Oil the pan by coating it with cooking oil, shortening or butter. Mix together the dry ingredients first, then stir in the liquids until the batter is smooth.

- 2 1/4 cups flour
- 1 Teaspoon baking powder
- ½ Teaspoon Salt
- ½ cup cooking oil
- 1 Tablespoon Cinnamon
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 3/4 cup sugar

Bake 30-35 minutes with ~14 coals on top and 6 coals underneath the Dutch Oven. Test for doneness with a fork or toothpick that sticks in and comes out cleanly.

Measurements without utensils

In Camp, we don't always have measuring spoons and cups, so here are some ways to use what's available to approximate for dry ingredients (**remember, a Scout is clean**):

- ½ Cup 1 open fistful
- ½ Cup 1 stick of butter or margarine
- 1 Tablespoon (tbsp.) Five finger pinch
- 1 Tablespoon (tbsp.) 1 finger "gob" of shortening (what sticks to 1 finger)
- 1 Tablespoon (tbsp.) Palm of hand (center)
- 1 Teaspoon (tsp.) Four finger pinch
- 1/8 Teaspoon (also called a "pinch") Two finger pinch

Fluid standard measurement equivalents (and a few approximations):

- 3 Teaspoons = 1 Tablespoon = ½ ounce (oz.) Palm of hand (center)
- 16 Tablespoons = 1 cup = 8 oz. 1 typical small camp cup
- 2 Cups = 1 pint = 16 oz.
- 2 Pints = 1 quart = 32 oz.
- 4 quarts = 1 gallon = 128 oz. = 1 typical large milk jug

Epilog

I hope that by cooking a few of these basic items, you will gain the confidence needed to try cooking some truly gourmet camp meals. When you feel confident, move on to try stuffed Cornish Game Hens, or quiche, or cherry pie, or...use your imagination. Once you know how to cook with a Dutch Oven, then deciding what to cook becomes more fun. Nothing tastes better than a meal that you've cooked yourself in the great outdoors.

For any comments, questions or improvements to this *Scout's Guide to Beginning Dutch Oven Cooking*, please Email the author at tiplej@acm.org.

Yours in Scouting,

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