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How To Season A NEW Cast-Iron Pan:

Please don't throw away that old cast-iron skillet that was your mothers or grandmothers! Clean it! As long as it has no cracks or nicks, you can clean, season, and use it.

I personally have three old cast-iron skillets - a 10-inch and a 12-inch skillet, two large griddles, and a Dutch Oven. I love my cast iron pans!



All new cast-iron pots and skillets have a protective coating on them, which must be removed. American companies use a special food-safe wax; imports are covered with a water-soluble shellac. In either case, scrub the item with a scouring pad, using soap and the hottest tap water you can stand.

The surfaces of a new cast-iron pan are porous and have microscopic jagged peaks. When you purchase new cast iron cookware, **they are gunmetal gray (silver) in color, but after using them, they start turning darker until they are very black. This is normal and should be expected. The dark patina takes awhile to achieve!**

Avoid buying cast iron pans or skillets with wooden handles; these are useless for oven cooking and most camp cooking.

If the utensil comes with a cast iron lid, like a Dutch oven, make sure the lid fits properly on the pot before purchasing it. **Also cure the lid's inside the same as the pot.** Otherwise, use a glass lid or whatever you have.

How To Season:

You season a cast iron pan by rubbing it with a **relatively thin coat of neutral oil** (I stress a light coat of oil).

NOTE: Use vegetable oils (canola, sunflower, etc.), shortening (like Crisco shortening) or lard for seasoning your

There are several reason that people rave about their cast-iron cookware. Besides being an ideal heat conductor, cast iron heats evenly and consistently, it is inexpensive and will last a lifetime, actually several lifetimes) with proper care, and it is an old-fashioned way to cook fat free. (*See Cooking with Cast Iron below on the left.*) When well seasoned, a cast-iron pan will be stick resistant and require no additional oil.

The benefits of cast-iron pans are terrific: Foods glide out of it as from no pan made with Teflon; it goes from stove to oven; no special utensils are needed to cook in it; it won't warp, and cleanup is a cinch. **It's time people realize the culinary wonder that a cast-iron pan can be!**

Professional chefs consider cast-iron pans to be precision cooking tools, as these dependable pans enable precise control of cooking temperatures. Their heat retention qualities allow for even cooking temperature without hot spots. Cast-iron pans can be used on top of the stove or to bake in the oven. All our grandmothers had cast iron skillets and stove-top griddles. In fact, your grandmother swore by it and the pioneers depended on it.

If you don't own a cast-iron skillet, it's well worth the time and money to invest in one. You can find them for sale on the internet, at cook stores everywhere, thrift stores, flea markets, or you can scour the tag and yard sales for one that might look as if it has seen better days. If the pan is rusty or encrusted with grease, buy it anyway. Don't worry! I'll tell you how to get that new or old one into shape so you can enjoy it for a lifetime of fat free cooking. You'll be able to pass the pan on to your own children and grandchildren.

The first most common mistake of why people do not like cast iron is that they say everything sticks. If food sticks to your cast-iron pan, your pan is NOT seasoned right and you need to re-season it. Cast iron is a natural non-stick surface and if your pan is seasoned correctly it WILL NOT stick!

cast iron pans. I recently experimented and found out that food-grade coconut oil/butter also works great.

Place the cast iron pan, upside down, in the oven, with a sheet of aluminum foil on the bottom to catch any drips. Heat the pan for 30 to 60 minutes in a 300 to 500 degree oven. Once done, let the pan cool to room temperature. Repeating this process several times is recommended as it will help create a stronger "seasoning" bond.

The oil fills the cavities and becomes entrenched in them, as well as rounding off the peaks. By seasoning a new pan, the cooking surface develops a nonstick quality because the formerly jagged and pitted surface becomes smooth. Also, because the pores are permeated with oil, water cannot seep in and create rust that would give food an off-flavor.

Your ironware will be slightly discolored at this stage, but a couple of frying jobs will help complete the cure, and turn the iron into the rich, black color that is the sign of a well-seasoned, well-used skillet or pot.

Never put cold liquid into a very hot cast iron pan or oven. They will crack on the spot!

Be careful when cooking with your cast-iron pots on an electric range, because the burners create hot spots that can warp cast iron or even cause it to crack. Be sure to preheat the iron very slowly when using an

Skillet or Frying Pan: Choose the size most comfortable for you. I recommend the 10-inch one, as it's the best tradeoff of size and weight. Personally, I own 10- and 12-inch models because on occasion, I'm called on to feed large groups of people.

Griddle: Want to make the greatest pancakes you've ever eaten? Want your French toast to have that crispy edge so prized at breakfast time? You need to get a cast-iron griddle pan and get it good and hot on the stovetop. They work fine on electric or gas ranges, or over a campfire if you're so inclined.

Dutch Oven: Before anyone ever thought of a crock pot, there was the cast-iron Dutch oven. Dutch ovens have been used for hundreds of years. Nothing will hold a good, even temperature better than the heavy metal of this monster pot, and it can go from stovetop to oven without missing a beat.

Using and Caring For Your Cast-Iron Skillet

Preheat your pan before preparing your meal. **Water droplets should sizzle, then roll and hop around the pan, when dropped onto the heated surface.** If the water



electric range and keep the settings to medium or even medium-low.

Important:

Unless you use your cast-iron pans daily, they should be washed briefly with a little soapy water and then rinsed and thoroughly dried in order to rid them of excess surface oil. **If you do not do this, the surplus oil will become rancid within a couple of days.**

Remember - Every time you cook in your cast-iron pan, you are actually seasoning it again by filling in the microscopic pores and valleys that are part of the cast-iron surface. The more you cook, the smoother the surface becomes!



This is an old cast-iron griddle that belonged to my husband's mother. I use it to make pancakes, French toast, and toasted cheese sandwiches. What is nice about it, is that it fits over two of my gas

disappears immediately after being dropped, the pan is too hot. If water only rests and bubbles in the pan, it is not quite hot enough. **NOTE: Do not pour large amounts of cold liquid into your hot skillet. This can cause the cast iron to break. Never forget your potholders! Cast iron pan handles get HOT when cooking!**

There is a trick to maintaining cast iron cookware and that trick is known as "**seasoning**" or "**curing**." Your food will never stick to the bottom of the skillet or pot and the iron will not rust if it is properly seasoned. Plus the cast-iron cookware cleans up easily as well. Seasoning or curing cast iron means filling the pores and voids in the metal with grease of some sort, which subsequently gets cooked in. This provides a smooth, nonstick surface on both the inside and outside of the piece.

NOTE: All new (not old pots) cast-iron pots and skillets have a protective coating on them, which must be removed. American companies use a special food-safe wax; imports are covered with a water-soluble shellac. In either case, scrub the item with a stainless steel scouring pads (steel wool), using soap and the hottest tap water you can stand.

If the pan was not seasoned properly or a portion of the seasoning wore off and food sticks to the surface or there is rust, then it should be properly cleaned and re-seasoned. Seasoning a cast iron pan is a natural way of creating non-stick cookware. And, like you cook and clean the modern non-stick cookware with special care to avoid scratching the surface, your cast iron cookware wants some special attention too.

Every time, after I use my cast iron skillet, I do the following:

1. Let the pan cool. Wash it with dishwashing soap and water. **Never soak or let soapy**

burners on the gas range.

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Cooking With Cast-Iron

An old-fashion way to cook fat-free

You can use a single cast-iron skillet for just about any cooking task: Bake a cake, sear a filet, roast or fry a chicken, fry potatoes, stir-fry vegetables, etc.

One skillet is all you need, but because cast-iron cooking is lot of fun and makes the food you cook taste great, you'll probably going to want more than one cast-iron pan.

water sit in the pan for any length of time. Rinse thoroughly, then dry with paper towels.

A lot of people disagree with using dishwashing soap and water to wash cast-iron pans. A chef told me that if a health inspector ever found a pan that had not been washed with soap and water in his kitchen, he would be in trouble. Plus the grease that is left behind will eventually become rancid. You do not want rancid oil in your foods and body.

NEVER put cast-iron cookware in the dishwasher.

- Place the cleaned cast iron pan on the heated burner of your stove for a minute or two to make sure that it is bone dry. While the pan is still hot and on the stove burner, lightly oil inside of pan (I mean a light coat) with a neutral cooking oil.
- Neutral Oils** - Use vegetable oils (canola, sunflower, etc.), shortening (like Crisco shortening) or lard for seasoning your cast iron pans. I recently experimented and found out that food-grade coconut oil/butter also works great.
- Leave pan on the hot burner of stove for a few minutes. Remove from hot burner and wipe excess oil off the pan with a paper towel.

Check out the large selection of
[Cast-Iron Cooking Recipes](#)

4. Store your cast iron cookware with the lids off, especially in humid weather, because if covered, moisture can build up and cause rust. Be sure that you place a couple paper towels inside to make sure that any moisture that forms will be absorbed by the paper towel. **Never put the utensil in the dishwasher or store it away without drying it thoroughly.**

If your food gets a metallic taste, or turns "black", it means one of two things are wrong. Either your pot has not been sufficiently seasoned, or you are leaving the food in the pot after it has been cooked. **Never store food in the cast iron pan as the acid in the food will breakdown the seasoning and take on a metallic flavor.**

If your old or new cast iron pans gets light rust spots, scour the rusty areas with steel wool, until all traces of rust are gone. Wash, dry, and repeat seasoning process.

If too much oil or shortening is applied to a pan in the seasoning process, it will pool and **gum up** when the pan is heated. In this case, the goo can be scraped off and some more grease rubbed over the spot, or the pan can be re-scrubbed and reseasoned. **Heating the pan upside-down may help prevent gumming but protect your oven by using a foiled-lined baking sheet or aluminum foil to catch the grease.** Seasoning at higher temperatures, approaching the smoking point, of the oil used will result in darker seasoned coatings in less time that aren't sticky or gummy.

You can cook almost any food in cast iron.

- Acidic items like tomato sauces will be darker from iron leaching out, but many people with iron deficiencies do this for extra iron in their diet.

- Never store acidic products in cast iron. In fact, never ever use your cast iron pots for storing any foods.
- It is not recommended that you use your cast iron as a pot for boiling water. Some people say that the hot water will remove small bits of oil from the surface which will then be found floating around. Water breaks down the seasoning and can cause your cast iron to rust. **NOTE: I have some trouble with this statement, because I use my cast iron pots for making stews and spaghetti sauces all the time, and I can find no damage to my pots. You be the judge on this!**

Techniques for Restoring an Old Cast-Iron Skillet

Questions & Answers - Comments and Hints

Please check out my Q&A pages below on the many different techniques on restoring and seasoning cast-iron pans. Hopefully the following topics will help to answer your many cast iron questions:



[Ammonia for Cleaning Cast Iron](#)

[Ceramic Top \(Flat Top\) Electric Range and Cast Iron Pots](#)

[Hot Fire for Curing & Cleaning](#)

[Iron and Carcinogens in Cast Iron](#)

[Misc. Questions & Answers](#)

[Pre-Seasoned Cast Iron Pots](#)

[Propane Torch for Cleaning Cast Iron](#)

[Salt for Cleaning Cast Iron](#)

[Sandblasting Cast Iron Pots](#)

[Sanding Cast Iron Pots](#)

[Self-Cleaning Oven for Cleaning & Seasoning](#)

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[Washing Cast Iron Pots](#)