

A Scout's Guide to Dutch Oven Cooking

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Prolog

Biscuits, scones, pancakes, chili, cornbread, pizza, roast chicken, 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 some great 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 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. Coat the bottom and sides of the oven with oil or grease where any food will be in contact to avoid sticking and tough clean-up.
3. Use the inside of the Lid of the Dutch Oven as a griddle. Pre-heat the lid to kill germs, before oiling it. Keep the lid well oiled during cooking.
4. Like a deep fryer (not suggested for young scouts).

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, like #2 above, 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 either new, or if by mistake it was washed with soap, then you must *season* the metal. For new ovens, follow the directions. To season a Dutch Oven in camp, wipe shortening (or cooking oil, if no shortening is available) lightly, and evenly on all inside surfaces of the clean oven (don't forget the lid). Put the lid on the oven, put the oven over a hot bed of coals, and put hot coals on top of the Dutch Oven. Leave on the coals for about 30 minutes. After cooling, gently wipe the inside surfaces where any oil remains pooled. Your Dutch Oven is now 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 Dutch Oven Cooking" for menu ideas and cooking tips. 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 all of these foods, but I hope that you try your hand at a few of these recipes. They're fun, they're easy, and they taste great.

“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 pre-mix dry ingredients before you leave home and put them into a ziplock bag. OIL THE LID before ladling any batter onto it! This recipe makes about nine pancakes:

- 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 pre-mixed 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 briquets under the Dutch Oven, and have as many briquets 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 pre-mixed 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 briquets under the Dutch Oven, and have as many briquets 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.

“We Want some Lunch!”

It has to be quick, and the patrol has to want to eat it. Some recipes for success at lunch-time.

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 (provalone 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.

“Where’s my Dinner?”

Some 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 is a dull (not shiny) and the cornbread is firm.

Roasted Chicken

“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 7 coals under the oven and 14 coals on top until cake starts to form. Check often after 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 Cake Cobbler

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 7 coals under the oven and 14 coals on top until cake starts to form. Check often after 15 minutes. May take longer than 30 minutes. *Gourmet touches include putting in two beaten eggs, and tossing in a little chocolate pudding.*

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 7 coals under the oven and 14 coals on top until cake starts to form. Check often after 15 minutes. May take longer than 30 minutes.

Fresh Blackberry Cobbler

Measurements without utensils

In Camp, we don't always have measuring spoons and cups, so here are some ways to approximate for dry ingredients:

- 1/2 Cup 1 open fistful
- 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 measurements (use measuring cups):

- 3 Teaspoons = 1 Tablespoon = 1/2 ounce (oz.)
- 16 Tablespoons = 1 cup = 8 oz.
- 2 Cups = 1 pint = 16 oz.
- 2 Pints = 1 quart = 32 oz.
- 4 quarts = 1 gallon = 128 oz.

Epilog