

Pikes Peak River Runners

Dutch Oven (DO) Cooking



By Christina King

Photo Credits: Christina King

INSTRUCTIONS:

Dutch Oven cooking/baking is not as hard some make it appear and your group will eat it up!

SUPPLIES:

- 12-inch Dutch oven with legs (aluminum – lighter and cleans easier, cast iron – much heavier, harder to clean & you must season it with oil). Not sure of the anodized DO's, I have never used one.
- 1 pair channel locks
- 1 pair tongs
- 1 pair oven mitts
- 1 round baking sheet
- ~20 charcoal briquettes (Kingsford are best, those with lighter fluid already added do not work well- they burn up too fast)
- lighter fluid
- matches or lighter clicker
- Round Pizza baking sheet



Find a level place to bake. Make sure it is safe from people (stepping on the hot coals) and fire hazards (out of the wind is good also). Place ~20 charcoal briquettes in a pyramid shape in a firepan with legs (best) or place a round pizza baking sheet in the firepan which you can later move up to the grill. Do not place on a firepan blanket (it will melt).

Add some lighter fluid to the coals (enough to get the coals started). Let the coals start to get gray on the edges. Spray the inside of the Dutch oven with PAM vegetable spray. Do not spray lid. After the coals have begun to get gray, place ~12 coals (using tongs) in a symmetrical pattern on top of the lid (outside) of the Dutch oven. Symmetrically arrange the remaining ~8 coals (using tongs) on the round baking sheet. Place the Dutch oven on top of the 8 remaining coals to preheat (using the channel locks to grasp the Dutch oven handle). You can preheat the Dutch oven for approximately 10 minutes if you prefer- I usually do not. See the pictures at the top of this page to get an idea on how to place the coals.

HELPFUL HINTS:

- If the weather is cold or windy or you just want to hurry things along, use heavy duty aluminum foil to lightly wrap the Dutch oven and this increases the temperature. If you use foil wrap for wind, be aware that you need to keep a sharper eye on the food, or it can burn. Many times, this will significantly shorten the baking time, do not let it burn!
- Baking desserts: Box mixes are great and easier than making recipes from scratch, follow the package directions when making cakes, muffins, or Bisquick cobbler.
- Hot coals need to be put in an ash can or firepan immediately after cooking or someone might step on them (unless you are using a firepan).
- The Dutch oven is always hotter than you think. Use tongs, channel locks, and oven mitts. You will learn the hard way after the first time you grab a hot DO handle without protection.
- I prefer aluminum 12-inch Dutch ovens with legs. Why? Easier to clean, lighter, just the right size for groups of 4 or more people, and legs make it easier to balance.
- The number of coals stays the same unless you stack Dutch ovens. Then the number is ~ 8 on the bottom and ~12 on the top, with ~8-10 in between.
- Pillsbury rolls (in the tubes) and Marie Callendar cornbread mix (in a plastic pouch, just add water) are also excellent and easy side treats to make with dinner.
- Imagination is the key. Just think of the things you can bake in your ~350°F oven at home and transfer this recipe to the river. I would always experiment before I got on the river. Leftovers can also be used up with easy potato or rice casseroles.
- I do not attempt to do recipes that require greater than a 400° F oven and/or take longer than one hour to cook. It is usually a bit too optimistic to try on the river.
- Do not forget that this addition of cookware to your kitchen can also be used as a heavy-duty cookpot on the camp stove when not used as a Dutch oven over coals. I regularly fry sausage, bacon, potatoes, heat spaghetti sauce and cook rice using DO's as well.

You are now ready for a recipe. Be sure to test your recipes at home before venturing out on the river and having to serve a large group.

USEFUL LINKS:

- [Idaho Cee Dubs](#)
- [Dutch Oven Dude](#)