

How to Clean Cast Iron Pans Using a Wood Stove

By Kate Sheridan, eHow Contributor

Cast iron pans and a wood stove were literally made for each other. Many cooks like to use a long winter afternoon to clean all of their cast iron cookware at once, to take advantage of the blazing fire heating the house. A little oil, salt and the swish of a paper towel are all you really need for the after-use cast iron pan cleanings, when the pans are well-seasoned.

Difficulty:

Easy

Instructions

Things You'll Need

- Cooking oil or shortening Table salt Plastic, rubber or scratch-less scraper Paper towel or damp cloth

○ 1

Prepare to clean a new cast iron pan before using it for the first time by giving it what is called an "initial pan seasoning." Your goal is to begin to fill in the porous cast iron surface with an oily base that will eventually give the pan a smooth, non-stick surface. This will make future cleanings quicker and easier.

○ 2

Build a blazing fire in your wood stove firebox.

○ 3

Open the firebox damper so that heat from the fire will flow into the stove oven, if you're using a wood cook-stove.

○ 4

Coat the inside of your cast iron pan completely with vegetable oil or shortening.

○ 5

Rest the cast iron pan on top of the wood stove and let the coating heat up and seep into the cast iron pan for at least an hour, keeping the fire burning the entire time.

○ 6

Heat the oil-coated cast iron pan in the bake oven for at least an hour, if you're using a wood cook-stove, replenishing the firebox to keep the oven warm.

○ 7

Remove the cleaned and seasoned cast iron pan after an hour. Allow it to cool.

o 8

Repeat the initial seasoning process at least 3 more times, allowing the clean cast iron pan to cool between seasonings.

o 9

Wipe off the left-over food, grease, dirt and residue with a shop towel, paper towel or slightly damp rag when cleaning your cast iron pan after cooking.

o 10

Coat the cast iron pan lightly in oil or shortening when all residue is removed. It's now ready for its next use.

o 11

Use a tablespoon of table salt, mixed with oil, to scrape the food off your cast iron pan if baked-on food is difficult to clean with a cloth and oil. Use a plastic, rubber or non-abrasive scraper to work the salt-oil mixture into the cast iron and clean the residue with a damp cloth.

o 12

Coat the clean cast iron pan with oil or shortening and place it back into the wood stove oven, or on the wood stove top if the stove has no oven, for at least 1 hour.

o 13

Let the pan cool, then put it away.

o 14

Toss the entire pan into a blazing wood stove fire for very difficult cleaning, or if the food appears to have melted into the cast iron itself. Fire will not hurt the cast iron, and fire will turn the baked-on food to carbon.

o 15

Don't replenish the fire in the firebox. When the fire has been reduced to embers, carefully remove the cast iron pan and place it in a safe place to cool.

o 16

Scrape off the carbonized food with oil, salt and a rubber spatula or plastic scratch-less scraper.

o 17

Season the pan with oil again, then put it away for its next use.