

Woodstove cooking

By Cindi Myers

If you have a woodstove for heat, take advantage of the fire to cook your dinner for no extra cost and very little effort. The heat of a woodstove can cook yummy baked potatoes and apples, savory soups and stews, roast chicken or beef, and many other dishes.

Though you can adapt almost any pots and pans to woodstove cooking, you'll save yourself trouble and ensure better results if you invest in a cast iron Dutch oven with a lid and a cast iron trivet. The Dutch oven heats evenly and stays hot for a long time, which is perfect for roasting meat or stewing moist dishes. The trivet allows you to regulate the amount of heat the Dutch oven receives. Aluminum foil, a wooden spoon, a set of tongs, a fireplace shovel, and some potholders will round out your woodstove cooking supplies.



Bake potatoes or apples in the coals.

Cooking inside the firebox

Start a fire in your stove and let it burn for an hour or more before you begin cooking. This allows the stove to heat up and creates a good bed of coals if you're going to be cooking in the stove. Once the stove is hot, you only need to keep a low, steady fire going to cook almost anything.

Bake white potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, or apples inside the stove. Wrap each fruit or vegetable

individually in two layers of aluminum foil. This helps to keep the food from burning. Push the fire to one side of the stove box and lay the food on the coals. Use the fireplace shovel to pile more coals on top. Close the stove door and bake for half an hour, then use the tongs to turn each foil packet over and cook for another 30 minutes. If one part of the firebox feels hotter than the other, you can switch the packets around to different positions.

Deluxe baked apples:

4 apples (Braeburn, Granny Smith, or other baking apples work best)

¼ cup butter, softened

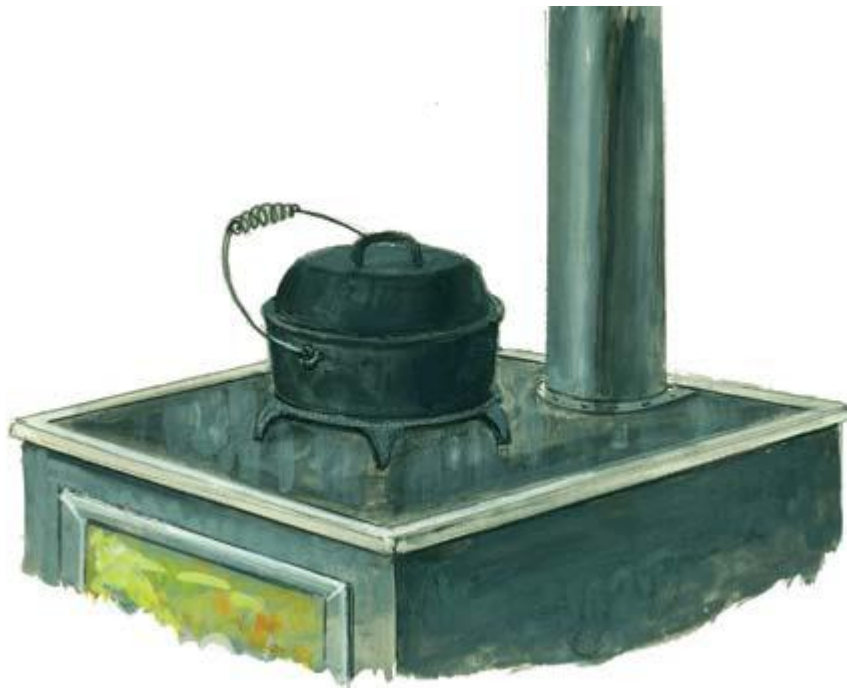
¼ cup brown sugar

¼ cup raisins

¼ cup chopped walnuts

½ tsp. cinnamon

Wash and core the apples. Cream the butter and brown sugar together. Stir in the raisins, walnuts, and cinnamon. Set each cored apple on a sheet of aluminum foil. Stuff the center of each apple with the filling mixture. Fold the foil up around the apple and pinch closed. Wrap with a second sheet of foil and bake in oven or woodstove one hour.



Stove top cooking

The Dutch oven acts like a slow cooker on top of the stove to cook soups, stews, casseroles, and roasts. The tight-fitting lid keeps juices in and ensures moist, flavorful meat. The trivet allows you to regulate the heat so the bottom of the pot doesn't burn.

Start by putting all your ingredients in the Dutch oven. Place the oven, uncovered, on top of the hot woodstove.

In ten minutes or less, the ingredients should start to bubble. Set the trivet on the stove and move the oven onto the trivet. Put the lid on the oven and allow to cook as you would a slow cooker. You can leave soups and stews all day. A roast with vegetables takes three to four hours. Check the food every hour or so to

make sure nothing is sticking, and that the food is still hot. If your fire dies down and the food in the Dutch oven starts to cool, set the pot back on the stove top and build up the fire again. Move the Dutch oven to the trivet when everything heats up again.

Roast chicken and vegetables:

- 1 frying chicken
- 1 onion
- 3 potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into chunks
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and chopped
- salt and pepper
- rosemary
- 1 cup water

Wash the chicken and remove any innards and discard. Quarter the onion and stuff this into the cavity of the bird. Arrange the chicken, breast side up, on a meat rack in the bottom of the Dutch oven. (If you don't own a meat rack, arrange three metal canning jar rings in the bottom of the pot and set the chicken on these.)

Arrange the vegetables and garlic around the chicken. Sprinkle the bird with rosemary, salt, and pepper. Pour the water over the vegetables. Put the lid on the pot and cook on the woodstove or in the oven for three to four hours.

Potatoes and sausage:

- 4 large baking potatoes
- 1 onion
- 2 links Polish sausage, Kielbasa, chorizo, or other sausage
- ½ cup grated cheddar cheese
- ½ cup milk
- salt and pepper

Peel the potatoes and cut into ¼-inch-thick slices. Dice the onion. Slice the sausage into 1-inch chunks. Grease the inside of the Dutch oven. Layer the potatoes, onions, and sausage. Sprinkle on the cheese. Pour in the milk. Season with salt and pepper. Place the lid on the pot and cook on the stove for three to four hours. If the potatoes start to stick, add a quarter cup of water.

Chicken noodle soup:

- leftover chicken carcass and meat from roast chicken
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- ½ onion, diced
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- salt
- pepper
- rosemary
- 1 pound egg noodles
- 1 cup frozen peas
- water

Place the chicken carcass in the Dutch oven and cover with water. Boil on top of the woodstove for one hour. You'll want to have the oven directly on the stove top the whole time. Remove the Dutch oven from the stove. Fish out the chicken carcass and add the leftover chicken meat, celery, onion, carrots, salt, pepper, and rosemary. Return the Dutch oven to the woodstove and allow the soup to simmer until ½ hour before you're ready to eat. Add the egg noodles, frozen peas, and more water, if necessary, to cover. Allow to simmer for 30 minutes.

You can adapt almost any slow cooker recipe to woodstove cooking, since the combination of Dutch oven and trivet produces slow, even heat. You can also reheat liquids such as soup or stew, or boil water for tea or coffee by placing the pot directly on top of the hot stove. Master the art of woodstove cooking and you may find your kitchen stove sits idle most of the winter.

