

Cast Iron pans

I challenge you to go out by the end of the weekend and find (do you have one stuck in the back of the cupboard or hanging on the wall as a decoration?) or buy a cast iron frying pan and cook the following recipe in it. They are the original non-stick pan and once you have it well seasoned.. give your teflon pan away!

I bought a frying pan and a dutch oven for my bf for Christmas and they are getting used daily and they are the best thing since sliced bread.. honest!!

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 with proper care, and it is an old-fashioned way to cook fat free. 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. Teflon puts out toxic chemicals when it is heated and has been known to kill housebirds. <http://www.ecomall.com/greenshopping/teflon4.htm> Teflon and the chemicals used in its production have grown into a \$2 billion-a-year industry. This includes ammonium perfluorooctanoate, known as C-8, which has been linked to cancer, organ damage and other health effects in tests on laboratory animals. Teflon is a member of a family of chemicals called "perfluorochemicals" (PFCs). According to the Environmental Working Group, the nonprofit advocacy organization who initiated the breaking of the story, "PFCs virtually never breaks down in the environment and has been found to contaminate most of the US population, including 92 percent of children tested to date." <http://www.ewg.org/reports/pfcworld/>

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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 cookstores 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. I PROMISE!

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.

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. (My ...OK.. HIS.. cast iron pan is just great at pancakes and french toast as well).

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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. We cooked the best roast in it the other night. \*mmmmmmm\*

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 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." Your food will never stick to the bottom of the skillet or pot if it is properly seasoned, and the cookware cleans up easily as well. 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.

Clean the cookware while it is still hot by rinsing with hot water and scraping when necessary. Do not use a scouring pad or soap (detergent) as they will break down the pan's seasoning. I find that the best way to thoroughly dry my cast-iron pans is to put them on top of the burners. Depending on the condition of your pan, after the pans are dry give them a light coat of oil to keep away the rust

and then place in the cupboard (I don't always do this). 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. Iron being a reactive metal, it has disadvantages in that acidic foods (such as tomatoes, apple, vinegar) should not be cooked in it for any length of time.

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. 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.

When you purchase new cast iron cookware, they are medium gray in color, but after using them, they start turning darker until they are very black. This is normal and should be expected. 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, e.g, a Dutch oven, cure the lid's inside the same as the pot. Otherwise, use a glass lid or whatever you have.

How To Season A New Cast-Iron Pan:

The surfaces of a new cast-iron pan are porous and have microscopic jagged peaks. You season a pan by rubbing it with oil (solid vegetable shortening, bacon grease, or lard will work as well) heating it for 30 to 60 minutes in a 300 degree oven, and then

letting it 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 premeated with oil, water cannot seep in and create rust that would give food an off-flavor.

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. Ours, when we seasoned the new pan and dutch oven and lid.. SMOKED UP the kitchen.. it was no big deal.. run fans.. just wanted you to be aware.. it freaked us out at first.

Techniques for Restoring an old Cast-Iron Skillet

1. My (this is the author.. not me, tenzicut) existing cast-iron pans came to me in bad condition (they were very old frying pans from my mother and one from a rummage sale). My husband hand-sanded them until smooth and removed the burnt coating and rust. I then seasoned the pans. They are now my favorite frying pans and I wouldn't trade or loan them to anyone! They are especially great for "searing" meats and seafood.

2. Scour with a steel or copper pad and scouring powder. Wash with soap and water, towel dry, and place in a hot oven for 30 minutes. Reseason before using and it's ready.

Traditional Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

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The upside-down cake, which was so popular in the '50s and '60s, is again gaining in popularity. No wonder - it's still wonderful! Use your cast-iron frying pan. The heavy pan keeps the butter from burning, and the handle makes it easy to flip the cake upside down when it is done.

Topping:

1/4 cup butter or margarine  
2/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar  
1 (1-pound, 4 ounce) can sliced pineapple  
Maraschino cherries  
1/4 to 1/2 cup chopped nuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a 10-inch cast-iron frying pan , melt butter or margarine. Stir in brown sugar until blended. Remove from heat. Drain pineapple, reserving 2 tablespoons syrup. Arrange pineapple slices onto top of sugar mixture. Place a maraschino cherry (is it possible to find maraschino cherry's that dont have that BAD red dye?) center of each slice. Sprinkle with chopped nuts.

Cake:

1 cup all-purpose flour  
3/4 cup sugar  
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon sea salt  
1 free range OG egg, room temperature  
1/2 cup milk  
1/4 cup vegetable shortening  
1/4 teaspoon grated lemon zest  
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice  
1 teaspoon (Frontier OG) vanilla extract

In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Add egg, milk, and vegetable shortening; beat 2 minutes. Add reserved

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pineapple syrup, lemon zest, lemon juice, and vanilla extract; beat 2 minutes. Pour over pineapple slices in frying pan, spreading evenly. Bake 40 to 50 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from oven and cool 5 minutes on a wire rack. Run knife around edge of pan to loosen; cover with a cake plate and invert. Serve warm.  
Makes 8 servings.

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