

Camp Oven Cooking

Camp oven cooking is part of Australian out back history. Over the ages drovers, shearers, and Bushmen have used the Camp Oven on the move and by miners during the days of the gold rush. This type of cooking has definite advantages.

With the advent of the four-wheel drive vehicle becoming so popular, more and more people are becoming aware that their vehicle is able to travel on more than a sealed road, and are taking advantage of this.

With this, a new adventure comes. Until a few years back few people were seen in some of these areas of the Australian out back. The desert areas are now a destination that is not impossible to traverse for these new explorers

All people have to eat, and part of the enjoyment of these trips is to sit around a campfire at night and cook up a nourishing meal, and what better to do it in but a camp oven.

Preparing your new Camp Oven

A camp oven must be seasoned before it is used. Being of cast iron, this material is porous, and the inside of the oven has to be treated so as to seal the surface.

Before you first cook in the camp oven fill with water and slowly heat but do not boil. Wash the new oven and dry. Rub cooking oil (I like to use olive oil) inside and outside of the camp oven with a cloth or paper towel. Repeat this 3 or 4 times over the next 2 days and then place in a hot oven at home and bake it for about an hour applying more oil to the inside of the camp oven and don't forget the lid. The oil will glaze on the surface and give it a protective coating. Before storing after use always give the camp oven a good wash and then an oiling. This will stop rust forming. If this process of oiling is not done before you use it, food particles penetrate into the cast iron and will go rancid while the camp oven is not in use.

Camp Fire

Too much flame will over heat the camp oven and will usually cause the contents to be burnt. Ideally the cooking should be done on a bed of coals - with some coals spread on the lid to even out the heating. With too much heat, this will cause evaporation of liquids inside the camp oven. When cooking with the camp oven this way it is advisable to use a cake rack in the bottom or if this is not available you could use some short clean tent pegs to stop the food being caught. A layer of alfoil over the pegs or rack is something else to consider.

Another method to use the camp oven is to dig a hole deep enough to put the camp oven in the hole with some room, near to your fire. Place some coals in the bottom of the hole but not too many, you only want to warm the bottom of the oven. Once this is done, place more coals around the sides and on the lid. This method gives a very constant heat and does not burn the bottom. This is the method I prefer to use where possible but in some places it is impossible to dig a hole, as the ground is too rocky, so the first method has to be used.

I hope these hints will assist you to having more enjoyable times. Keep an eye on this section of our site, as we will be adding to our cookbook with some more culinary delights.

Damper

Ingredients

Double qty. for 12 or 16-inch oven
3 cups S.R. flour
½ cup milk
3 teas. Salt
½ cup water or beer
90 gm (3 oz) Butter
Extra flour

Sift flour and salt into bowl. Rub in butter until mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Make a well in centre of the dry ingredients, add liquid all at once. Mix lightly with a sharp knife in cutting motion. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead lightly. Knead dough into round and place on foil-covered rack and place in camp oven. Bake over a slow fire, placing some coals on the lid of the camp oven. When cooked, after approx. ½ hour damper should be golden brown and sound hollow when tapped. Variations: Mixed dry fruit or raisins and some sugar can be added to the mix or grated cheese may be added to the dry mix. Other variations can be tried to your own taste.

Lamb Shanks in Mint

Ingredients

4 Lamb Shanks
2 tab. Mint jelly
1 Diced Onion
½ cup tomato sauce
1 Cup water
1 tab. Butter or oil

Heat oil and brown shanks in camp oven, then brown onions. Add all other ingredients, and simmer slowly until cooked.

Barbecue Spare Ribs

Ingredients

1½ kg spare ribs
1 teaspoon. Salt
2 tab soy sauce
3 tab. Tomato sauce
1 tab sugar
2 tabs honey
1-cup chicken stock

Mix soy sauce, sugar, salt, chicken stock, tomato sauce and honey together and marinade spare ribs in for 1 hour. Put a little water in bottom of camp oven and place spare ribs on rack sitting in camp oven over water. Roast for about 1¼ hour, turning spare ribs from time to time. Heat diluted marinade, and serve with spare ribs over rice.

Camp oven chicken

Ingredients

2 small or 1 large chicken
1 onion
2 apples
1 cup of white wine or cider
4 rashers bacon

Stuff chicken with quartered apples. Brown chopped bacon then chicken. Place all other ingredients in the oven and cover tightly with foil. Simmer slowly till tender.