

SESSION 3 — COOKING WITH DUTCH OVENS

Learning Objectives: At the end of this session, each participant should be able to:

- Explain the basics of dutch oven use.
- Prepare dutch oven meals.

Background

Perhaps the most useful cooking utensil in camp is the dutch oven. It is the most practical utensil for baking and can also be used for stewing, frying, browning, and steaming. Turn the lid over, and you have a fine griddle for pancakes and eggs.

The dutch oven is less practical for trail use because of its weight, but it's hard to beat in camp. For an illustration of a dutch oven, see the Appendix. Recipes for dutch oven cooking are also included in the Appendix.

Selecting a Dutch Oven

Dutch ovens are made of cast iron or cast aluminum. The cast iron type is heavier — weighing about eighteen pounds in the twelve-inch (diameter) size — but it holds heat very well and maintains a more constant temperature than aluminum. Cast iron rusts easily, so the iron oven requires more care than aluminum.

Aluminum ovens are less than half as heavy as cast iron, and so might be the choice for backpackers. Because aluminum reflects heat well, an aluminum oven will require more coals than a cast iron oven to achieve the same degree of cooking heat.

Dutch ovens can be bought in sizes ranging from eight to sixteen inches in diameter. For a Scout patrol, the best size is twelve inches because it can be used for a dish for six to eight people. An excellent choice is the twelve-inch cast iron oven offered by the BSA Supply Division (No. 01044).

In choosing an oven, be sure it has three legs so that there is room for coals under it. The lid should have a lip or flange around the edge so that hot coals can be placed on it for baking. The lid should also have a handle the cook can hook with a lifter to remove the lid with coals on it.

The oven itself should have a bail of heavy wire so that it can be turned easily while it is hot. There should be a good seal between oven and lid so that little heat escapes during cooking.

Useful Tools

As accessories to your dutch oven, you need some type of tool to manipulate the hot lid and oven. Recommended are the hot-pot tongs available from the BSA Supply Division (No. 01215). The tongs can be used to grasp the lid, either by its flange or by the handle, and also to lift the oven's bail.

If you don't have tongs, you can make a lifter from two feet of coat hanger or similar wire. Bend it double and then shape it into an elongated "S" with hooks about two inches deep. With this lifter, you can remove the lid or lift the oven by the bail.