

## Cooking Lesson: Seasoning Cast Iron Like The Pros

In the days before we had non-stick cookware, we had the next best thing - seasoned cast iron cookware. While non-stick cookware has certainly outdone cast iron cookware in the non-stick category, cast iron pots and pans are still favored by many chefs, including the professionals because of their durability and ability to retain flavor.

But, if you're not lucky enough to have a hand-me-down from Grandma, you may find yourself confused about how to become a cast iron chef. Have no fear - you can learn to season cast iron cookware with the pros and keep them in great shape for years to come.

### Seasoning New Cast Iron Cookware

The process is actually quite simple. When done correctly, your pans will last a long time and may even become your own hand-me-downs in the future.

1. Heat your oven to 300 degrees.
2. Coat the pan with lard or grease. (Be sure that you do not use vegetable oil or commercial cooking sprays. While they may seem easier, they will not only cause your cookware to be seasoned incorrectly, but they will also leave a sticky film on the outside of the cookware that is impossible to remove.)
3. Place the pan in the oven on the middle rack and allow it to bake for 15 minutes.
4. Remove the pan and pour out any excess grease or lard.
5. Put the pan back into the oven and bake for another two hours.
6. Repeat as needed

Many cast iron enthusiasts will swear upon repeating the seasoning process several times before ever using the cookware the first time. Each time you season the cookware, the seasoning bond becomes stronger. Many people will recommend that the first few times the cookware is used it should be used to cook greasy foods (bacon, fatty meats, etc.) to again strengthen the seasoning bond.

### Re-seasoning Cookware

If you find that you seasoned the pan improperly the first time, or if food starts to stick to the pan after a period of time in use, you may want to re-season the cookware.

1. Wash the cookware thoroughly with a steel wool pad (doing this while the pan is warm and still safe to touch is best).
2. Make sure the pan is fully dry (use a towel if needed).
3. Follow the seasoning steps above to re-season the pan.

### Cleaning Your Cast Iron Cookware

To make your cookware last the test of time, be sure to take proper care of it. Remember the creed of every enthusiast of cast iron - no soap and no steel wool. Soap and steel wool will cause a breakdown in the seasoning bond and should not be used to clean your cookware on a regular basis. If you're baffled at this moment, have no fear. Cleaning cast iron cookware is a breeze.

1. You'll need to rinse your cookware while it is still hot. If food is stuck to it, then scrape the pan or pot as needed.

That's it! Remember not to store food in your cast iron cookware because it may attach a metallic flavor to the food. In addition, store your pans with the lids off to prevent moisture from accumulating and rusting from occurring.

Now that you know the ins and outs to cast iron cookware, you can start creating your own family heirloom - as well as some great food!

### About the Author

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