

Cast Iron Cookware Care

Seasoning: As long as cast iron cookware has been around, cooks have talked about the best way to season it. We've taken some advice from those cooks, from independent testing and our own experience to arrive at a formula which should keep your pot, pan or skillet cooking well.

The first step is to remove the pre-seasoning coat applied at the factory. Start by scouring all surfaces with steel wool soap pads and hot water, then rinsing. Repeat until factory coat has been removed, then dry the cookware thoroughly.

Begin your own season immediately, since iron will rust if left uncoated. Using unsalted vegetable oil or shortening, coat the inside and outside of the cookware and the cover, if it has one.

Next, place the cookware upside down over a flat pan or aluminium foil in a 250-degree oven and leave it there for two or three hours. Wipe out the inside of the cookware or its cover with a paper towel and re-oil several times during the

heating. After it cools, the cookware is ready to store or use.

Care: To keep your cookware seasoned, prevent rust and help keep food from sticking, use only a mild soap or dishwashing liquid to clean between uses. Never put cast iron cookware in the dishwasher.

Towel dry cookware after each washing, or reheat for a few minutes on the stove to remove any moisture. Many cooks lightly oil or grease their cast iron cookware both after cleaning and before cooking to help keep it seasoned evenly.

Store cookware and covers separately.

Re-seasoning: Rust, discolored food or metallic taste may be signs that your cookware needs re-seasoning. The process starts with a good scouring with steel wool to remove any rust. Then hand wash the cookware with hot water and mild soap, dry immediately and oil.

Repeat the final oven heating process, described above.