

Pioneering Today

Bonus Chapter

There is something about slow cooking that brings out the full flavor of food. Due to the low temperature, the liquid doesn't evaporate off. The food continually bastes and cooks in its own juices. It is always exposed to the source of its flavor.

I don't know about you, but I want to be slow cooked in Jesus. Imagine the love of Jesus continually flowing over you, His essence seeping into your heart, a sweet aroma to all you encounter.

Most of us are familiar with the slow cooker, but I want to introduce you to the pioneer version. The grandfather if you will of our modern day crockpot—the cast iron Dutch oven.

It allows you bake and slow cook any food that would be traditionally cooked in a regular oven. During the pioneer days, these were especially handy while traveling in wagon trains.

As you now know, cast iron needs to be seasoned. You rub your cast iron all over with oil and then bring it to a high temperature. This allows the oil to penetrate and create a smooth non-stick surface.

If we rub ourselves all over with Jesus and His word, when things in our lives heat up, we can truly soak Jesus deep down into our hearts. We'll create a surface of Jesus. A surface the things of this world can't stick to.

A cast iron pan is never too far gone. You may have to re-season it, but high heat will burn all the impurities away. No matter how hurt, how far back you've slid, Jesus can and will always redeem you.

Before you begin preparing your dish for the Dutch oven, you need to start your coals. Lighting your coals in a chimney helps them to burn better. You want them to burn for about twenty minutes, or until they're almost completely gray. Some people say they should be all gray, but then they're closing to being burn out. We've found partially gray is best.

The chimney blocks the wind, making it harder for your coals to stop burning. Just like storing God's word in your heart. Can you learn it from others, a pastor, mentor, or a friend? Yes, but only relying on God's words from others is like lighting coals without a chimney. It will likely burn out before it's truly lit.

Once your coals are ready, you'll need to put a small pile on the ground, beneath your Dutch oven. For cooking outdoors, you'll need a spider Dutch oven, an oven with three legs to allow freestanding.

Remember to put a piece of tin foil down on the ground if you're not cooking in a fire pit, unless you don't mind things getting burnt from the coals or the ashes.



For easy clean up, some people line their Dutch oven with aluminum foil. As long as your Dutch oven has a good seasoning, there's no need for this. But I'll confess, when we're camping and don't have running water I use aluminum foil.

Blackberry and Dumplings

4 cups blackberries, rinsed and drained

½ cup white sugar

¼ cup brown sugar

1 tablespoon lemon juice

2 tablespoons flour

¼ cup water

Dumplings

1 cup flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

3 tablespoons sugar

½ teaspoon salt

½ cup plus 1 tablespoon milk

2 tablespoons oil (your choice olive, coconut, vegetable)

Mix blackberries, sugar, lemon juice, flour, and water to a boil in Dutch oven. Mix together dumplings recipe. Drop by spoonful onto boiling berry mixture. At a low boil cook for 10 minutes with the lid on. Remove lid and continue to cook for another 10 minutes. Serve with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream if desired.

Any recipe you bake in an oven can be cooked in a Dutch oven. In fact, I believe bread tastes better when cooked in cast iron and outdoors. I don't know what it is, but the food tastes fabulous.

You'll learn how many coals are required for your dishes as you go. We've found about seven coals on the bottom is great when trying to reach the equivalent of a 375 degree oven. Remember wind and outside temperature will affect your dish and adjust accordingly.

As heat rises, you'll need three times as many coals for the top of your Dutch oven. Be sure when you purchase your Dutch oven that it has a flat lid with a lip to keep the coals from rolling



off.

After your food has been baking, it's always a good idea to check inside. Be careful when lifting the lid. Remember it's hot, so use a lid lifter and don't tip the lid or ashes will fall into your food (the lipped lid helps guard against this. If the dish looks like it's cooking correctly, put the lid back in place and continue cooking.

If it's cooking too fast, simply remove some coals. Too slow, add more on top. Expect at least an hour to cook your dish, remember, it's a slow version of the regular oven.

When food is done, serve out of your Dutch oven. Be sure to watch out for hot sides. When it's clean up time, follow the instructions from page 58 in *Pioneering Today*. Your cast iron Dutch oven will last for years if taken care of properly.

The more you cook with your Dutch oven, the better you'll be able to gage how many coals and the length of time each dish will take to cook. Just like our relationship with Jesus. The more

we immerse ourselves in His presence, the better we can learn to see how He works in our lives and hearts.

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