The Hillbilly Housewife's Cast Iron Cookbook

Tried and True Recipes From My Family To Yours

from the Hillbilly Housewife
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Introduction

If I could have only one pan to cook with, it would be my trusty cast iron skillet. It just doesn’t get much more versatile than that. It’s perfect for searing, simmering, stewing, frying and even baking. I won’t bake cornbread in anything else and often use my trusty cast iron skillet to cook one pot meals.

Then there’s the fact that cast iron skillets have been used for hundreds of years. It gives us a connection to women cooking at the hearth. And with the durability of cast iron skillets, there’s a good chance that you’ll find your grandmother’s cast iron skillet sitting in a cupboard, ready to be used again.

If you find a cast iron skillet that looks like it’s in bad shape, don’t give up on it yet. Chances are that you can restore it with nothing more than a little elbow grease. Take a look at this “Tale of a Sad Iron Skillet” to see how easy it is to restore and re-season even the oldest skillet.

Through this eBook I’d love to share some great tips with you on caring for your cast iron cookware, answer some common questions and of course share some wonderful recipes with you.

I hope you’ll find yourself falling in love with cast iron cooking as much as I have.

Warmly,

Susanne – The Hillbilly Housewife

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Why Cast Iron?

Once you start cooking with cast iron, odds are you'll end up loving it. For starters, it's a true culinary workhorse able to go from cooktop to oven to outdoor grill to blazing campfire with ease. No matter what's on the menu, you know it's going look and taste better when you use your favorite cast iron cookware.

Here are a 5 Reasons to Love Your Cast Iron Cookware:

1. **It's Versatile.** Cast iron cookware can be used in many different ways: on top of the stove, in the oven, under the broiler, on the grill, or even over an open campfire. This versatility saves you both time and money because you don't have to buy or wash a bunch of extra pots and pans.

For example, to make a big pot roast in a single pan, pull out your cast iron Dutch oven to brown the meat, then add the remaining ingredients before placing in the oven to cook.

Who needs a big roasting pan? Just take out your largest cast iron skillet and roast a whole chicken in it. You can also sear steaks on top of the stove and then put them in the oven to finish cooking without needing to dirty another dish.

2. **Economical.** A basic piece of cast iron cookware is usually a steal, whether you buy it new or at a yard sale. The simplest form, called 'raw' cast iron (the black color), is what you might envision on a campfire. There are also more colorful enameled varieties, but they tend to cost a lot more. Fortunately, some well-known lines of old-fashioned cast iron cookware have come out with their own enameled versions that rivals the designer labels.

For the most part, if you want a good, solid piece of cookware without spending a lot of money, cast iron is the right place to start.

3. **Durable.** This old-fashioned cookware is nearly indestructible. Now, that doesn't mean you can't damage the seasoned finish, but even if you do - it can be fixed in most cases.

First, try cooking some bacon or other fatty food in it. If that doesn't give the results you want, you can always re-season the pan to restore the finish to its previous luster.
Know you know why cast iron cookware is handed down for generations - it lasts forever!

4. Practical. Have you ever started cooking a dish on your cooktop only to realize you need to pop it under the broiler to finish it?

If you have ever had to transfer food from one piece of cookware to another just to complete a recipe, you know what a pain that can be. If you are using a regular skillet, you need to worry about whether or not the handle will melt or if the whole thing will crack from the heat.

Unlike regular pots and pans or fancy specialty cookware, cast iron is no-nonsense. Which means you don't have to think about anything but your recipe and gathering everyone around the table.

5. Sentimental. Cast iron has been a mainstay in kitchens for generations. As a result, cast iron is often associated with warm, happy memories of delicious meals shared with close family and friends. Perhaps you have fond memories from your childhood of delicious Sunday breakfasts at grandma's house or of your mom's favorite comfort foods hot from the oven. Or maybe you had the chance to hang a cast iron pot over an open fire before enjoying a hot bowl of chili or stew.

Whatever your personal memories of cast iron may be, chances are your own frequently used pieces will become a treasured part of your family's history, which is truly something to love.
How to Care for Your Cast Iron Cookware

Over time, cast iron cookware develops a thin protective coating known as “seasoning” from the natural fats and oils associated with the cooking process. This coating fills in all the nooks and crannies inherent in the pan metal to create a smooth, uniform surface.

This seasoning is what gives cast iron cookware its wonderful non-stick quality.

Today, most new cast iron cookware comes with this protective coating or “seasoning” already on them. If the package has “pre-seasoned” printed on it, your new pan should be ready for use because the manufacturer has already completed the initial seasoning process for you.

When you buy a brand new pre-seasoned cast iron skillet, all you need to do is rinse it out in hot water and dry completely by placing on your cooktop over medium-high heat. Make sure the entire surface is dry before putting away because cast iron can and will rust if water is left sitting on its surface.

After cooking with your new cast iron skillet, wash it by hand in hot water right away. Avoid putting your skillet in the dishwasher or soaking it in water overnight due to the potential for rust.

Instead, once the pan cools to the touch, rinse it under hot water while using a dishcloth or soft-bristled nylon brush to remove cooked-on particles. Also avoid using any harsh soaps, detergents, or metal scouring pads and scrapers as these items can damage or remove the seasoning.

How to Re-Season Your Cast Iron Skillet

If your seasoned cast iron cookware loses its sheen for whatever reason, you may need to re-season it to get it back into tip-top shape.

If you search online for how to re-season a cast iron skillet, you may be a bit overwhelmed by all the different points of view out there regarding the best methods and types of oil to use.

For example, there is a lot of debate about what oil to use due to the different smoke points associated with each type of oil and the release of unhealthy free radicals caused by using oils with too-low smoke points. As a result, flaxseed oil is often suggested as an ideal oil to use due to its high smoke point.
According to Lodge, a leading manufacturer of cast iron cookware, the proper way to re-season their products is to start by preheating your oven to 350 – 400°. While it is heating, wash the pan with hot, soapy water and a stiff brush. (It's okay to use harsher soap and a stiff brush for this because you’re not trying to protect the original seasoning at this point).

Once clean, rinse and dry completely before applying a very thin coat of melted solid vegetable shortening or other cooking oil of your choice. Place the pan upside down on the upper rack of your preheated oven, with a metal cooking sheet under it to catch any drips.

Leave pan in hot oven for at least an hour. Turn oven off and allow the skillet to cool completely while still inside the oven. Remove pan from oven and if the coating isn’t as consistent as you’d like, repeat this process until the desired sheen is achieved.

Following these easy tips on how to care for your cast iron cookware will help keep your pieces in great shape. A minimal investment of time and effort on your part will yield delicious meals for you and your family for years to come.
Beyond Skillets: 4 Must-Have Cast Iron Cookware Pieces

Cast iron skillets are so easy love. Whether inherited from a beloved grandmother, found at a bustling flea market, or purchased brand new, the origin of these durable and dependable skillets doesn’t really matter. Once one makes its way into your home, it will soon become a treasured kitchen staple.

Fortunately, the beauty of cast iron doesn’t end there. In fact, there are many affordable cast iron pieces available that are just as wonderful as your favorite skillet.

Here are four other great cast iron cookware pieces:

1. Dutch Oven - No kitchen is complete without a cast iron Dutch oven. There are many choices available, especially now with the increasing popularity of the enamel finishes.

Although the colorful designer styles can be pricey, you can still find the simple 'campfire' or 'raw' varieties of cast iron at a very reasonable price.

Both the designer and raw styles work extremely well - after all, the quality is in the cast iron, not the color!

When you shop, choose a Dutch oven that is heavy, with sturdy handles, and a tight fitting cast iron or heavy glass lid. A good cast iron Dutch oven can be used on top of the stove to make soups and stews or it can be used in the oven to make roasts and casseroles. You can even take a “raw” version on your next camping trip to whip up some delicious meals over your campfire.

Aside from your cast iron skillet, your Dutch oven will be among your most often used cookware pieces.

2. Grill/Griddle Combo – Although you may long for a stove with a built-in grill/griddle combination, it may not be a realistic option in the near future. However, you may be surprised to discover how easy and fun it is to cook with a cast iron version. Just heat up your cast iron griddle and you will feel like a short-order cook in no time!

Cast iron is so versatile, you'll soon be frying up crispy bacon, golden brown pancakes, and perfectly done eggs without having to wash several pans or mess around with a bunch of specialty appliances. Plus, the grill side makes those nice grill marks that
make everything you cook look so wonderful. For some reason, food that looks good seems to taste better, too.

3. Muffin and Loaf Pans – The best part of making cornbread in a cast iron skillet is the golden crust that forms around the outside of the pan. When you use cast iron muffin or loaf pans, you’ll end up with even more of that golden crusty goodness.

In addition, you can use cast iron muffin pans for all sorts of muffins and other individual serving size dishes. Plus switching to cast iron loaf pans for bread results in consistently golden brown crusts with no scorched bottoms.

4. Fajita Serving Platters - To re-create that restaurant-style sizzle when your fajita or steak comes to the table, you can’t beat individual cast iron serving platters. Just heat the platters in a hot oven, and when your meal is ready to serve, carefully pull the platters from the oven and plate them up for that mouth-watering sizzle everyone loves.

You can also find sizzle platters with heat-resistant carriers so all you have to worry about is making enough food so you don’t run out when everyone asks for more!

Besides the fun restaurant-quality presentation you can achieve with these individual serving platters, they offer the added bonus of keeping your food warmer longer. This is a great idea when you’re cooking and serving outdoors. No more chilled plates on the picnic table, which makes sizzle platters both fun and practical.

A good set of cast iron skillets is a great starting point for every kitchen. But, once you get your basic skillets seasoned just right, isn't it time to expand your horizons?

These four versatile pieces will open up a whole new world of cast iron cooking in no time. From roasts to soups to breads to the lazy weekend morning breakfast extravaganza, cast iron cookware does it all - and does it deliciously!
**Frequently Asked Questions About Cast Iron Cookware**

Whether you're new to cast iron cooking or have been using your favorite pieces for years, chances are you may have a few questions about how to use and care for your cast iron.

1. **Question:** I bought a new cast iron skillet and it says it's "pre-seasoned" and "ready to use." Is it really? I've heard so much about the proper seasoning of cast iron, this just doesn't seem right.

**Answer:** This is a tricky question two-part question which actually can be answered both "yes" and "no."

Yes, you can cook in new "pre-seasoned" cast iron cookware without going through any seasoning process. However, it is not truly “ready to use.”

You should still rinse your new cast iron piece in hot water to remove any of the dust or dirt it picked up on the store shelf. Then, dry it completely by heating over a burner set to medium-high heat for about one minute.

Once it is completely dry, allow your pan to cool before lightly coating with a good food-quality oil or fat with a high smoke point. Adding a light coat of oil after each use will help build up an even better patina on your pan surface over time.

2. **Question:** I had a really nice seasoning on my cast iron skillet, but now it seems to be peeling and chipping. What happened?

**Answer:** There are a few things that can cause this. The most common causes are washing your skillet with a harsh soap or letting it soak overnight in the sink. Both of these actions can soften the finish and cause it to peel off or disintegrate.

The recommended method for washing your cast iron is to give it a quick rinse in hot water, wipe with a paper towel, and dry thoroughly on a hot burner. This will maintain the cast iron patina.

Cooking highly acidic foods or using metal cooking utensils can also damage the patina on your cast iron pieces. For instance, if you are making something with a lot of tomatoes, you may see some distress or dulling on the finish. To combat the reaction...
that acidic foods have on the finish, be sure to cook other types of food in the same pan often.

Fortunately, if the patina is very well established, a little acid isn’t going to hurt it. It’s really in those first stages that you might have some pitting and softening. Just watch it closely and avoid acidic foods as much as possible in newly seasoned cookware.

3. Question: I recently pulled out my grandmother’s old cast iron skillet and noticed that rust had formed where the pots were stacked together. Is it ruined?

Answer: No, definitely not. While it can be discouraging to find rust on your favorite pieces of cast iron, it is not impossible to remove.

There are a lot of remedies out there, but the most natural methods for rust removal are often the best and safest. Simply sprinkle salt onto the area, cut a lemon in half, and rub the lemon over the salt. Let the cast iron sit out to dry, then rinse. Repeat the process to remove any remaining spots of rust.

The nice thing about this method is you are not going to hurt the pan, and you can repeat it as often as necessary. Be wary of any suggestions that a spray-on oven cleaner is the only remedy. A little salt and lemon will remove the rust without severely stripping whatever patina you have already built up.

4. Question: I really want to wash my cast iron cookware, but I keep hearing people say I should just wipe it out to keep the finish nice. Isn’t that just asking for trouble with germs?

Answer: In a perfect world, soap would never touch your cast iron cookware. However, there are times when a little mild dish soap on a sponge is needed. The key is to not overdo it with harsh detergents or abrasive surfaces so you don’t damage the patina.

If you’re worried about germs, soap and water isn’t the only solution. Heat your cast iron over high heat and add some oil to the pan. Allow the oil to heat to just below the smoke point. Then, remove from the heat, let cool and wipe with a paper towel. No germs will survive through this process.
If you still want a water bath, add water to the cookware and bring it to a boil, then pour it out, and dry on a hot burner, wiping the cookware clean. If you absolutely must use soap, then do so sparingly. Wipe the cookware with a sponge (never a scrubber) and a dab of dish soap. Then, rinse and dry thoroughly. Be sure to brush on some oil or grease after each cleaning, regardless of what method you use.

Keep in mind, there are different methods to care for your cast iron cookware depending on the types of foods you cook in them. For example, if you cook a lot of chili or other acidic food, you may have to season your cast iron more often. If you use a skillet just to fry eggs and bacon, you can probably just wipe it out with a paper towel and you'll be good to go.

With a little practice, you'll know exactly what your cast iron needs to perform perfectly every time.
Cast Iron Skillet Recipes

Caramelized Onions

Although caramelized onions take a little time to prepare, they can add a whole new flavor profile to your favorite recipes. Try them on pizza and hamburgers or served alongside your favorite steaks and roasted vegetables.

When prepared in a seasoned cast iron skillet, the onions will turn a dark caramel color that is next to impossible to achieve with a regular non-stick pan.
Ingredients:

- 2 or 3 large yellow onions
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- pinch salt
- 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar

Directions:

With a sharp knife, remove both ends of onion and cut in half lengthwise. Turn one piece of onion onto flat side and cut into thin slices, working from one end to another. Repeat until all onions are sliced.

Melt butter in cast iron skillet over medium heat.
Add onion slices to skillet and drizzle olive oil over the top. Sprinkle with salt, if desired.

Slowly cook the onions down over medium heat for 45 minutes to an hour. (Total cooking time will depend on how many onions were used, the onions’ sugar content, and how old they are).
Stir the onions every 5 or 10 minutes while they are cooking to prevent scorching.

Once the onions are done caramelizing, add balsamic vinegar to deglaze the pan. While the liquid is bubbling, gently scrape the bottom of the pan to incorporate the fond or brown bits on the bottom of the pan into the onions.

Season with additional salt, if desired. Use immediately, or cool and store in the refrigerator for up to one week. Caramelized onions can also be frozen and stored for a couple of months.
Cast Iron Brownies

These brownies are chewy and delicious and will have a nice crust around the edges thanks to the cast iron skillet.

Note:
This recipe is based on using a 12” pre-seasoned cast iron skillet. If using a smaller skillet, you may need to adjust the cooking temperature to 325 and extend the cooking time to account for the extra thickness in the batter.
Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter (2 sticks)
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¾ cup flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- powdered sugar, for dusting (optional)
Directions:

Preheat oven to 350˚

Add butter and unsweetened cocoa to a 12” cast iron skillet. Heat over low heat until butter is completely melted. Stir occasionally until the cocoa is incorporated into the melted butter.

Remove skillet from heat and add both sugars. Stir until thoroughly combined.

In a medium bowl, beat eggs and vanilla with a fork before adding to the skillet. Add flour and salt and stir into batter until no trace of flour remains. Use a rubber spatula to remove excess batter from around the edges of the pan and to even out the thickness of the batter throughout.

Place skillet in oven and bake for 40 – 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove from oven and let cool completely.

Dust top with a light coating of powdered sugar, if desired. Serve alone or warmed with a side of vanilla bean ice cream.
Sweet Cornbread with Golden Brown Crust

Using a pre-heated cast iron skillet gives this moist and sweet cornbread a beautiful golden crust. This recipe is designed for a 12" cast iron skillet. If using a smaller skillet, use remaining batter to make cornbread muffins.
Ingredients:

- ¾ cup unsalted butter
- ¾ cup white sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1¾ cup buttermilk*
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 1½ cup corn meal
- 1½ cup all-purpose flour
- ¾ teaspoon salt
Directions:

Preheat oven to 375˚ and place a seasoned 12” cast iron skillet inside.

Melt butter in microwave (approximately 40 - 45 seconds). Once melted, combine with white sugar in a large bowl.

Beat eggs in small bowl, then thoroughly combine with butter mixture.

Stir baking soda into buttermilk and add to mixing bowl.

Combine cornmeal, flour and salt together in a separate bowl, and then slowly stir into wet ingredients. Combine thoroughly to form a thick batter. (If batter is too thick, add additional buttermilk, 1 tablespoon at a time, to achieve desired consistency).

Carefully remove preheated skillet from oven with potholders or oven mitts, and pour prepared batter into pan. Using a rubber spatula, smooth batter to an even depth.
Return to oven and bake for 25 – 30 minutes, or until top is a golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.

* You can substitute ¼ cup + 3 tablespoons milk and 1 cup + 2 tablespoons Greek yogurt for the buttermilk. Thoroughly combine milk and yogurt in separate bowl before adding.
Oven-Roasted Whole Chicken
Ingredients:

- 1 whole roasting chicken, approximately 4-5 pounds
- 1 large yellow onion or 2 medium, cut into uniformly thick slices
- 1 whole orange, cut into quarters
- 8-10 cloves garlic, crushed and skins removed
- 4 tablespoons butter, cut into slices
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary, leaves removed and chopped, plus 3 whole sprigs
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves removed, plus 3 whole sprigs
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 batch Oven-Roasted Red Potatoes (optional – Recipe below)
**Directions:**

Preheat oven to 425˚

Remove giblets from chicken cavity and discard. Rinse chicken and pat dry with paper towels.

If desired, prepare one batch of Oven-Roasted Red Potatoes in a 12” pre-seasoned cast iron skillet as directed.

Once potatoes have been browned on the cooktop, push them to the outer edge of the pan and placed sliced onions in the center. Otherwise, omit the potatoes and just place sliced onion on bottom of skillet.
Set chicken on top of onions and fill cavity with sliced oranges, garlic cloves and whole sprigs of rosemary and thyme. For a nicer appearance, tie legs together with kitchen twine.

Add chopped rosemary and thyme leaves to a flat plate and press butter slices into the herb mixture. Repeat on the other side. Use a knife to separate the skin from the breast meat and slide the herbed butter slices in between.
Drizzle olive oil over top of chicken breast and use fingers or pastry brush to coat exposed surface. Season generously with salt and pepper, to taste.

Place skillet in oven and roast for approximately 1 hour or until juices run clear when you cut into the area near the base of the thigh. Actual cooking time will vary depending on how large the bird is and individual oven settings.

Remove skillet from oven, tent with aluminum foil and allow to rest for 10 to 15 minutes before serving.
Cast Iron Rosemary Roasted Red Potatoes
Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 2 tablespoons onion, finely minced
- 2 pounds red potatoes
- sea salt and pepper, to taste
Directions:

Preheat oven to 425˚

Remove rosemary leaves from woody stems and finely chop.

Wash and cut potatoes into uniformly sized pieces. Place in bowl and drizzle with extra virgin olive oil. Add rosemary and chopped onion to the bowl and toss with your hands to combine. Add salt and pepper to taste.
Melt butter in a large cast iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add coated potatoes to skillet without overcrowding. Without stirring, cook until a brown crust appears. Gently turn the potatoes until all sides are evenly browned.

Place skillet in oven and roast for 30 to 35 minutes or until cooked through.
Banana Chocolate Chip Pancakes

Cast iron cookware is an ideal choice for making pancakes. Use either a large cast iron skillet or a griddle for perfect results every time.

This recipe calls for separating the egg whites from the yolk when combining the wet ingredients. Beating the whites and folding them in at the very end will help make your pancakes lighter and fluffier.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 ½ tablespoon white sugar
- 1 ¼ cup whole milk
- 1 egg, yolk and whites divided
- 3 tablespoons melted butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup mini chocolate chips
- 1 banana, quartered lengthwise; hold quarters together and cut into slices
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Directions:

Heat pre-seasoned cast iron skillet or grill over medium-high heat.

Combine dry ingredients in a bowl. Stir thoroughly and break up any clumps.

Add milk, egg yolk, melted butter, and vanilla extract to bowl and mix thoroughly.

Form a well in the middle of the dry ingredients and egg yolk mixture to the center.

Combine ingredients enough to moisten all dry ingredients. (Do not over mix). Gently stir in banana and chocolate chips.

Right before cooking, beat the egg whites with an electric mixer until stiff peaks form, then gently fold into the batter. Cook immediately after this step.
Add a drop of water to your cast iron skillet or grill. If it dances around the pan for a bit, it is ready. Add vegetable oil to pan and swirl to coat.

Add approximately ¼ cup pancake batter to the skillet or griddle. When the edges crisp and bubbles begin to form on top, it is ready to flip. Cook until golden brown on both sides.

Don’t press down on the pancakes with a spatula while cooking or they will lose some of their fluffiness.

If the first pancake gets too dark before the inside cooks, adjust your heat accordingly.

Repeat with remaining batter and serve immediately with your choice of toppings. Butter, maple syrup and powdered sugar are excellent choices.
Deep Dish Pizza with Barbeque Chicken and Caramelized Onions

Want to enjoy a delicious deep-dish pizza with a crispy, golden crust without leaving the comfort of your own home?

Fortunately, you can make deep-dish pizza at home without needing to buy any special equipment. All you need is a well-seasoned 12” cast iron skillet, a good pizza dough recipe and your favorite toppings.

The following instructions can be easily customized to create any kind of pie you desire.

This version combines sweet and spicy barbeque chicken with caramelized onions (first recipe in this cookbook) to create a nice departure from the more traditional pepperoni and cheese.

Toppings

- 2 cups shredded rotisserie or left-over chicken breast
- 1 cup prepared BBQ sauce, plus ½ cup
- 1½ cups prepared caramelized onions*
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

Pizza Dough Ingredients:

- 2 1/4 teaspoons active dry yeast
- 3/4 teaspoons brown sugar
- 1½ cups very warm water (110°F)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (optional)
- 2 teaspoon garlic powder (optional)

Note:

This recipe makes two large pizzas. If you don’t want to use all the dough right away, you can store the remaining portion in your refrigerator for several days or freeze for later use.

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Directions:

Add warm water, then yeast and brown sugar to large bowl. Let sit for 10 - 12 minutes until the yeast is no longer active.

Add salt and oil, then add 2½ cups of flour – ½ cup at a time - while stirring constantly with a fork.

Coat hands with flour before dropping dough onto a well-floured surface. Knead in more flour until dough is no longer sticky.

Shape dough into a ball and add to a clean bowl sprayed with non-stick cooking spray.

Cover bowl with a towel and let sit for approximately one hour in a warm place.

While the dough is rising, preheat the oven to 400˚.

Once the dough has doubled in size, punch it down with your fist and reshape into a ball.

After a couple minutes, cut dough in half with large knife and roll out one half on a clean, well-floured surface. When the dough is about 4 inches larger than the bottom of your skillet, gently lift and place into pan.

Fold top edge of dough back so it touches the crust at the bottom of the skillet. Use your fingers to make sure the dough is the same thickness around the entire perimeter of the pan.

Combine chicken and one cup barbeque sauce in glass bowl. Toss to combine.

Add remaining barbeque sauce to the crust and spread evenly. Add chicken and caramelized onions, then top with mozzarella cheese. With a pastry brush, coat remaining exposed portions of dough with olive oil and sprinkle with garlic powder, if desired.

Place skillet in oven and bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until cheese and crust are golden brown.
**Pan-Seared Jumbo Sea Scallops**

To achieve a beautiful golden brown crust on jumbo sea scallops, you need three things:

1. The scallops must be dry
2. The pan must retain heat evenly
3. The pan must be super-hot

The second condition explains why your favorite cast iron skillet is a great choice to make picture-perfect seared jumbo sea scallops at home. So grab your skillet and let’s get started!

**Ingredients:**

- 1 lb. jumbo sea scallops, preferably fresh or dry-packed
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves fresh garlic, crushed
- salt and pepper to taste

**Directions:**

If possible, start with fresh or thawed dry-packed scallops. Pat dry, then season with salt and pepper.

If you live inland and dry-packed scallops are not available, it may be more difficult to get a nice sear as the water-packed versions tend to release excess water into the pan while cooking.

Rinse wet-packed scallops really well to remove any grittiness and pat dry with a paper towel. In addition, you may want to let them sit on the paper towel for a while to allow more excess water to drain. Once dry, season with salt and pepper to taste.

Add olive oil and minced garlic to a cold 12” cast iron skillet and heat over medium heat. Stir garlic until it begins to brown, then carefully remove from the skillet.
Discard garlic, but retain the garlic-infused olive oil and increase heat to high.

Add scallops to very hot skillet without overcrowding. Allow scallops to cook for several minutes without disturbing. Once a brown crust forms and the scallops release easily from the bottom of the pan, carefully turn each scallop with a set of tongs to repeat process on remaining side.

Once both sides are seared and the center is translucent, remove scallops from heat and serve.

For a beautiful presentation, place two or three scallops on a bed of wilted spinach or Swiss chard that has been sautéed in olive oil and finely minced garlic, and topped with salt, pepper and a squeeze of fresh lemon.
Sizzling Marinated Steak Fajitas

This flavorful fajita recipe is sure to become a family favorite. To get that wonderful sizzle at home, serve on pre-heated individual cast iron fajita skillets.

Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 pounds skirt steak
- 2 medium yellow onions, sliced lengthwise (not into rings)
- 2 green peppers, sliced lengthwise
- 2 red peppers, sliced lengthwise
- 8 – 10 flour tortillas

Marinade:

- 1 tablespoon fresh lime zest
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

Directions:

Combine all marinade ingredients in blender and process until smooth. Pour marinade into shallow glass dish and add meat. Turn meat to make sure it is coated on both sides.

Marinate at room temperature for 1 hour or overnight in the refrigerator. Turn meat occasionally while marinating.
To cook:

Add 1½ tablespoons olive oil to cast iron skillet and heat over medium-high heat for a couple minutes. While pan is heating, remove meat from marinade and drain off excess moisture.

Place steak in hot skillet and cook for 2 or 3 minutes per side or until it reaches the desired level of doneness. Remove steak from skillet and let rest under an aluminum foil tent for 5 to 10 minutes.

While the steak is resting, add the remaining olive oil to the pan, and return heat to medium-high. Add sliced onion and peppers to the pan. Do not stir vegetables until they begin to brown, then stir and allow to brown on remaining sides. Do not overcook – the goal is to get a nice brown sear without burning.

To Serve:

For soft tortillas, place them in a tortilla warmer or wraps in aluminum foil and place in warm oven.

Slice steak into thin slices and serve with warm tortillas, the cooked vegetables and your choice of toppings. They are delicious with sour cream, shredded cheese, lettuce, salsa or guacamole.
Super Easy Pan-Seared Rib Eye Steak

The beautiful thing about this recipe is its simplicity. When starting with a quality cut of meat, you need to add very little in the way of embellishments to get amazing results.

The tools you use to prepare this recipe are very important, however. First, you will need a large well-seasoned cast iron skillet to achieve the seared crust. Also, be sure to use tongs, rather than a fork, when turning the steak. If you pierce the meat, you will lose all those delicious juices.

Finally, be prepared for some smoking to occur, so have your exhaust fan on high when you get started. Fortunately, the smoke is short lived and the end result is so worth it.

Ingredients:

- 1 rib eye steak
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- salt and pepper, to taste

Directions:

Remove steak from refrigerator one hour before cooking. With a pastry brush, coat both sides with oil, then season generously with salt and pepper. Allow steak to come to room temperature.

In the meantime, place a cast iron skillet in the oven and preheat to 500°. Once preheated, carefully remove the hot skillet and place it on cooktop over high heat.

Place steak into dry skillet and flash sear for 30 to 45 seconds. Turn and repeat on the remaining side.

Place skillet back into the 500° oven and cook for 2 minutes, then turn and cook for 2 more minutes. (This will result in medium-rare steak. Cook more or less depending on your preference).

Remove from oven and transfer steak to cutting board and tent loosely with aluminum foil.

Allow to rest for up to 5 minutes before serving.
Hardy Egg and Potato Skillet

Ingredients:

- 3 baking potatoes, peeled and shredded (about 3 cups firmly packed)
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small diced red bell pepper
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 garlic clove, pressed
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 6 large eggs
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°.

Place shredded potatoes in a large bowl; add cold water to cover. Let stand 5 minutes; drain and pat dry.

Melt butter and oil in a 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Sauté onion and bell pepper 3 to 5 minutes or until tender. Add garlic and cook 1 minute longer. Add shredded potatoes; cook 3 to 5 minutes, until potatoes are golden, and 1/2 tsp. salt and flip them over. Cook for another 3 to 5 minutes until finished. Remove from heat.

Make 6 indentations in potatoes using the back of a spoon. Into each indentation, break 1 egg. Sprinkle eggs with remaining 1/4 tsp. salt and pepper.

Bake at 350° for 12 to 14 minutes or until eggs are set. Serve immediately.

Note: Soaking the potatoes in cold water keeps them from turning gray. It also rinses off some of the starch. Drain and pat them dry, so they won't get mushy or stick to the cast-iron skillet. 3 cups firmly packed frozen shredded potatoes may be substituted.
Cinnamon Scones

Ingredients:

for the scones

- 2 cups flour (all purpose or half whole-wheat, half all purpose)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup butter
- 1 egg, separated
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 1/3 cup buttermilk
- 1-2 Tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon

for the glaze

- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1-3 teaspoons milk
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Combine first four dry ingredients thoroughly. Cut butter in until mixture is crumbly.

Separate egg white and yolk. Save white for later.

In a separate bowl, mix egg yolk, honey and buttermilk. Add the dry ingredients and stir until just combined.

On a floured surface roll or pat out dough to a thickness of about half an inch and approximately eight inches in diameter. Cut dough into eight pieces of equal size.

Grease an 8 inch cast iron skillet and transfer scones.

Whisk egg white from earlier until frothy and brush over the tops of scones. Mix sugar and cinnamon together and sprinkle on top of egg white.

Bake at 400 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes.

Mix powdered sugar, milk and vanilla until glaze forms. Drizzle over baked scones to finish.
French Toast

Ingredients:

- 10-12 Slices Bread (French or Italian White Bread works best)
- 6 Large Eggs
- 1/3 cup milk
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Butter
- Powdered Sugar
- Syrup

Directions:

In a large, shallow bowl, mix together eggs, milk, cinnamon, and vanilla until well combined.

Warm cast iron skillet over medium-low heat. Lightly grease with butter.

Dip pieces of bread one at a time. Immerse and coat both sides. Don’t soak too long or it’ll get soggy and fall apart. Just dip it briefly so it gets immersed. Soak only as many slices as you will be cooking at one time. Place the soaked bread in the greased skillet.

Cook the bread on both sides until a light golden brown.

Arrange the cooked French toast on plates and dust with powdered sugar. Add syrup to taste.
Quick Dinner Rolls

Ingredients:

- 1 ¾ cups warm water
- 3 packets active dry yeast
- ½ cup honey
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- ½ cup melted butter
- Extra butter for brushing tops
- 4-6 cups flour
- 2 teaspoon salt
- Kosher salt for sprinkling on top

Directions:

Pre-heat oven to 400° F.

In a large mixing bowl, mix water, yeast and honey and let it sit for 5 to 8 minutes until foamy.

Using a stand mixer or handheld mixer, mix on low speed. Slowly add eggs and melted butter.

Add 3 cups of flour and continue to mix on low for one minute. Add salt.

Continue adding flour as needed until a soft ball of dough is formed.

Portion half of the dough into 12 balls and roll smoothly. Place in a cast iron skillet and cover with a dish cloth or plastic wrap. (Remaining dough can be made into rolls, bread sticks, or pizza dough.)

Let dough rest for 20 minutes or until double in size.

Brush tops with melted butter and put skillet in the oven.

Bake for 25 minutes. Tops should be golden brown. Remove from oven and brush with more melted butter and sprinkle with a small amount of kosher salt.

Serve warm.
Baked Potatoes

Ingredients:

- Medium sized baking potatoes
- Oil
- Seasoning salt (Or any other seasoning you normally use with potatoes.)

Directions:

After cleaning potatoes, cut them in half lengthwise.

Add oil to cold cast iron skillet.

Sprinkle seasoning salt evenly over the oil to preferred taste.

Place potatoes, cut side down, in oil. Put cold skillet into cold oven and turn to 400 degrees.

In 15 minutes, turn oven down to 350. Cook potatoes for 30-45 minutes. A fork should go easily into the potatoes.

Serve plain or with your favorite baked potato toppings.
Mixed Mushrooms

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ pounds variety mushrooms (crimini, white button, oyster)
- 2 king oyster mushrooms
- 1 Portobello mushroom
- 2 shallots, sliced paper thin
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
- Sea salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Preheat cast-iron skillet in the middle of oven at 500 degrees for thirty minutes.

Prepare the mushrooms by wiping off any dirt with a damp towel. Only if needed, rinse gently and pat dry.

Slice crimini and white button mushrooms in half. Remove and discard bottom tuft of king oyster mushrooms, then slice lengthwise into several long pieces. Cut down the middle to form short rectangles. Rip oyster mushrooms by hand into halves. Slice the Portobello into quarters or eighths to preference.

Carefully remove pan from oven and add all the mushrooms. Return to oven for five minutes. Remove again, and stir mushrooms so that all sides can get a good sear. Cook for additional five minutes.

Remove the pan from oven again. Add shallots, butter, and toss. Return to oven for five more minutes.

Remove for the last time. Add garlic and parsley. Let sizzle for three to five minutes. Salt and pepper generously and serve.
Baked Spaghetti

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¾ cup onion, finely diced
- 3 garlic gloves, minced
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 lb ground beef
- 28 oz can crushed tomatoes
- ¼ tsp granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- ½ teaspoon dried basil
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 cups water
- 8 oz thin spaghetti
- 8 oz shredded mozzarella

Directions:

Heat butter and olive oil in large cast iron skillet over medium high heat. Add onions, garlic, salt and pepper and sauté about 3 minutes, until tender.

Add ground beef and cook until no longer pink. Drain excess fat. Add crushed tomatoes, sugar, parsley, basil, and oregano. Mix in water until well combined.

Break spaghetti noodles in half and add to pan. Push down under sauce. Bring to slight boil, stirring occasionally, and cook until al dente, about 9-11 minutes.

Top with shredded cheese and bake under the broiler until cheese is melted and starting to brown.
Cast Iron Chili

Ingredients:

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 stalks of celery, chopped
- 2 lbs ground beef
- 4 cups cooked beans (kidney, pinto, red, etc.)
- 14.5 oz. diced tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 2 bay leaves

Directions:

Add 1 tablespoon of oil to cast iron pot and heat on medium. When oil is hot and shimmering, add onions and celery and cook for 5-6 minutes.

Add ground beef. Brown meat, stirring every minute or two until no longer pink.

Add tablespoon of oil, 1 tablespoon salt, 1 teaspoon black pepper, flour, chili powder, and garlic powder.

Cook for about a minute. Stir in beans, diced tomatoes, and bay leaves. Simmer on low for at least 30 minutes and up to 3 hours. Stir every 10 minutes or so during simmer to avoid burning.

Season to taste.
Frugal Skillet Frittata

Ingredients:

- 8 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup any shredded cheese
- ½ teaspoon salt (adjust to taste)
- ½ teaspoon black pepper (adjust to taste)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil (or butter)
- 2 cups leftover cooked vegetables
- 2 tablespoons parsley

Directions:

Preheat oven on broil.

Whisk eggs and milk in a large bowl until well combined. Add cheese and combine. Mix in salt and pepper.

In a large cast iron skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add vegetables and sauté for 2 minutes. Pour in egg mixture and stir. Cook 4 to 5 minutes on top of stove.

Sprinkle with parsley.

Place cast iron skillet underneath broiler for 3 to 4 minutes or until browned and fluffy.

Remove and let stand for 2 minutes. Slice in wedges and serve.
Cast Iron Peach Cobbler

Ingredients:

- 5 fresh peaches - peeled, pitted and sliced
- 5 slices white bread, crusts trimmed
- 1 ½ cups white sugar
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- ½ cup butter, melted

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Place peaches in prepared (buttered or oiled) cast iron pan. Cut bread into five fingers each, and lay over peaches. In a medium bowl, combine sugar, flour, egg and butter. Mix until blended well. Pour over bread and peaches.

Bake 35 to 45 minutes, until golden.
Cast Iron Cheese Bread

Ingredients:

- 2 cups flour
- 3 tablespoons oil
- ¾ cup plain yogurt
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- ¾ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup feta cheese
- 1 cup grated mozzarella
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 teaspoons unsalted butter, melted

Directions:

In medium bowl beat 1/3 cup flour with oil. Add yogurt and mix well. Stir in 1/3 cup more flour.
Sift cornstarch, baking soda and salt. Stir into flour mixture.
Gradually add remaining flour make a soft, but not sticky, dough. Lightly dust dough with flour and cover with a towel. Let rest at room temperature, 1 to 2 hours.

Soak feta cheese in water 10 minutes. Drain and crumble.
In medium bowl, mix feta, mozzarella and egg. Shape into 2 equal balls and set aside.

Divide dough into 2 portions and roll each into balls. Flatten each ball on a floured surface to 7 inch diameter.

With floured hands gently pull (be careful not to tear dough) into a 10 inch circle, approximately ¼ inch thick. Pat each cheese ball into 5 inch circle and place in center of dough.

Carefully pull up edges of dough pinching and pleating to enclose cheese completely. Pat to 7 inches round. Heat a large cast iron skillet over low heat for 3 minutes. Lightly coat skillet with melted butter.

Place bread seam side up into skillet. Cover and cook for 12 minutes over low heat. Shake pan occasionally. Uncover and flip bread over, cover and continue cooking over low until deep golden brown. About 12 minutes.

Lightly brush top of bread with butter and let stand for 5 minutes. Use a serrated knife to cut bread. Serve warm.
Chicken and Smoked Sausage Gumbo

Ingredients:

- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup flour
- 1 ½ cups chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped bell peppers
- 1 pound smoked sausage, cut into ½ inch slices
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne
- 3 bay leaves
- 6 cups water
- 1 teaspoon Emeril Lagasse Rustic Rub
- 1 pound boneless chicken meat, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- ½ cup chopped green onions
- 1 tablespoon gumbo filé powder

Directions:

Combine oil and flour in large cast iron Dutch oven pot over medium heat. Stir slowly and constantly for 20 to 25 minutes to make a dark brown roux, the color of chocolate.

Add onions, celery, and bell peppers. Stir 4 to 5 minutes. Add sausage, salt, cayenne, and bay leaves. Stir 3 to 4 minutes.

Add water. Stir until well combined. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cook, uncovered, for 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

Season chicken with the rub and add to pot. Simmer 2 hours.

Remove from heat. Skim off fat.

Stir in parsley, green onions, and gumbo filé powder. Remove bay leaves and serve in deep bowls.
Dutch Babies

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup butter
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup flour, sifted
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup confectioners' sugar for dusting

Directions:

Place 12 inch cast iron skillet inside oven and preheat to 475 degrees.

Combine flour, nutmeg, and salt.

Whisk eggs until light. Add milk and stir. Gradually whisk in flour mixture.

Remove skillet from oven and reduce oven temperature to 425 degrees. Melt butter in hot skillet. Completely coat skillet with butter. Pour batter in skillet and return to oven.

Bake about 12 minutes until puffed and lightly browned. Remove and sprinkle with powdered sugar.

Serve promptly.
Pan Fried Catfish

Ingredients:

- Oil or Butter
- 4 medium catfish fillets
- 1 cup cold milk
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 2 to 3 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly-ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Directions:

Rinse catfish fillets under cold water. Dry thoroughly with paper towels. Pour milk in shallow dish and add fillets. In another shallow dish, combine cornmeal, salt, pepper, and cayenne pepper.

One at a time, remove fillets and roll in cornmeal mixture until evenly coated. Place on large sheet of waxed paper to dry for 5 minutes.

Heat oil or butter in a large cast iron skillet. Add coated catfish filets. Cook 3 to 4 minutes. Flip catfish and cook another 3 to 4 minutes. Sprinkle additional salt on the catfish after each turn. Fish should be golden brown and flake easily with a fork. Drain on paper towels for 5 minutes.
Baked Caramel Apples

Ingredients:

- 4 baking apples (Granny Smith apples work great)
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar

Directions:

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Core apples, making sure not to puncture bottom of apples.

Place cored apples in small pie pan. Pack core holes approximately 1/3 full of brown sugar. Place a large chunk of butter on top of the brown sugar.

Place rest of butter in 3 to 4 small chunks in the center of pie pan and top with rest of brown sugar.

Place pie pan with the apples inside of warm cast iron Dutch oven. Bake for 45 to 60 minutes.
Recommended Resources

Crockpot Cooking Made Simple

Tired of spending all day stirring pots in the kitchen, or just don’t have the time to make a big homemade meal for dinner each night? I don’t either. Instead I put my crockpot to work.

Let me show you how simple and easy it is to put inexpensive and healthy meals on the table without all the work and fuss. Get your copy of Crockpot Cooking Made Simple here.

Slow Cooking Recipe For The Busy Mom

Slow Cooking Recipes for the Busy Mom ebook gives you 30 days of recipes for your crockpot plus shopping lists to make sure you have everything you need on hand for quick & easy stress-free meal planning.

There’s even a private Facebook group where we’ll be challenging each other to create delicious meals (and share the recipes).

Click now and order your copy of Slow Cooking Recipes for the Busy Mom: Quick & Easy, Stress-Free Meal Options today!