



Good food is at the centre of every great getaway. Both flavours and textures of food cooked in a camp oven only get better; bold, full-bodied, and robust. With some campfire finesse and camp oven flair, even the simplest meals simply come alive.

Don't expect to master it on your first go – but with a bit of practice, you'll get the hang of it, and the reward is a delicious, mouthwatering meal every time.

In this guide, we talk you through the entire camp oven cooking process: from preparing your oven to heating it to the most ideal temperature. We'll discuss different cooking techniques, how to care for your oven, and much more.

Crank the heat, jostle the coals, and read on to rustle up the good stuff!



*Once you get the hang of it, camp oven cooking will open up a new culinary world. Image: Campfire*

## Preparing Your Camp Oven

Preheat the camp oven on or in the main fire prior to cooking; if you place a cold camp oven on your coals, half the heat will be lost by heating up the oven as opposed to cooking your meal. A tripod is ideal for this task – or, if possible, sit the oven on top of a barbie plate in the flames. Don't forget to heat the lid too!

When you're ready to cook, prepare a bed of coals away from the main fire to place the camp oven atop of. If possible, scrape or dig a small hole the size of your oven and line with hot coals. This is not essential, but can be handy – especially if it's windy.

Of course, by all means, leave the camp oven on your tripod above the flames – but cooking directly on the coals is recommended for both baking and roasting.



*Prepare coals to cook your meal in your camp oven. Image: Mick Viller*

## Managing Environmental Factors

Keep in mind that the outside environment in which you are cooking will influence the temperature of your camp oven. Factors such as humidity, ambient temperature, and wind will all have an affect – and, unlike at home, you're not able to adjust the heat with a quick turn of a knob!

A helpful tip here is when you're cooking on a cold or windy day, lower your camp oven by digging a hole that's just the right depth for the coals to nest in. Try not to open the lid too much, as the wind will blow and lessen the heat.





*A cold night will affect your cooking. Image: Ozpig*

## How to Check the Temperature of Your Camp Oven

Gauging the heat required in relation to the volume of coals needed, and converting it all to traditional oven temperatures, can be tricky at first – but it's actually quite simple. If you want to check how hot your camp oven is without a thermometer, here's a super simple way to do so:

Tear off a strip of paper towel or newspaper and pop it inside the hot oven, on the top of a trivet to ensure you can accurately gauge the temperature. Take it out again and compare against the following:

- If the paper is cream or pale yellow, the oven is slow to moderate (180°C)
- If the paper is yellow to light brown in colour, the oven is moderate to hot (200°C)
- If the paper is dark brown, the oven is very hot (230°C)
- If the paper is black and smoking, the oven is too hot (250°C and over)

## Converting the Coals Used to Oven Temperature:



## Oven Temperature Conversion Chart:



Temperature	Number of coals		
	10 Inch Camp Oven	12 Inch Camp Oven	14 Inch Camp Oven
150°C	<u>7 on Top</u> 11 on Bottom	<u>9 on Top</u> 13 on Bottom	<u>11 on Top</u> 15 on Bottom
180°C	<u>8 on Top</u> 12 on Bottom	<u>8 on Top</u> 16 on Bottom	<u>12 on Top</u> 16 on Bottom
200°C	<u>9 on Top</u> 13 on Bottom	<u>9 on Top</u> 17 on Bottom	<u>13 on Top</u> 17 on Bottom
230°C	<u>10 on Top</u> 14 on Bottom	<u>10 on Top</u> 18 on Bottom	<u>14 on Top</u> 18 on Bottom
260°C	<u>11 on Top</u> 15 on Bottom	<u>11 on Top</u> 19 on Bottom	<u>15 on Top</u> 19 on Bottom

### Different methods

(Example: 12 inch camp oven)



#### 1. Stovetop cooking

All coals should be arranged underneath the camp oven to mimic the effect of cooking on a stovetop.

Top: 0 | Bottom: 24

- ✓ Boiling water
- ✓ Simmering soups & sauces
- ✓ Stews
- ✓ Sauteing
- ✓ Stir-frying
- ✓ Deep-frying



#### 2. Baking

For a medium heat, oven-like cooking environment.

Top: 16 | Bottom: 8

- ✓ Baked pasta dishes
- ✓ Meatloaves
- ✓ Cakes



#### 3. Roasting

Similar to baking but requires higher heat.

Top: 10 | Bottom: 18

- ✓ Roasting vegetables
- ✓ Roasting meat



#### 4. Broiling

Turn your camp oven into a broiler which allows you to do crispy toppings.

Top: 10 | Bottom: 0

- ✓ Casseroles
- ✓ Baked goods







## Consider the Type of Wood

Bear in mind that different types of wood will burn hotter than others – so even though you should try to minimise the number of times you remove the lid, it is important to check every now and then to ensure it is not burning. As a general guide, check on dampers after 20 minutes and roasts after 30 minutes.

## Roasting in a Camp Oven

- Place a well-oiled, seasoned, preheated oven on hot coals and add the meat.
- Cook the meat for 1.5-2.5 hours, depending on the size of the meat.
- Vegetables like potatoes, onions, pumpkin should be added to the oven for the final 45 minutes of cooking.
- Throughout the cooking process, check the temperature of the oven every 30 minutes or so. Add more hot coals if required.



*Fill up your campsite with the delicious aroma of a roast. Image: OZtrail*

## Stewing in a Camp Oven

- The longer the cooking time for stews the more tender the meat will become.
- Cook over a slow to moderate oven for 1-3 hours or longer as required.



## Baking in a Camp Oven

- When cooking cakes and slices in trays and cake tins, it is best to put a trivet in the bottom of the camp oven.
- This allows air to flow around inside the camp oven and provide even cooking.

Snowys' resident camp cook Cam demonstrates how to create some kick-butt camp oven treats on Camp Cooking with Cam:

## Caring for Your Camp Oven

It is essential to keep your cast iron camp oven in good condition for your next adventure by knowing how to clean it properly.

When cleaning your camp oven, always use warm water; cold water on a hot camp oven can cause damage. It's also essential to oil your camp oven after cleaning, to prevent rust from developing. Although most camp ovens are fairly robust and durable, take care and avoid dropping them on hard surfaces. Keep it secure when transporting to and from the campsite by designating a special spot in your kit.

That's all the trips and tricks we have up our sleeve about cooking in a camp oven! Ben and Lauren dig deeper into camp ovens in Episode 74, 78, and 103 of the Snowys Camping Show: If you have any hacks for making the perfect meal in your camp oven, we would love to hear from you.

**What's your favourite camp oven recipe? Let us know in the comments!**