



There's nothing like warm, campfire-cooked damper on a winter camping trip. It's a classic that has been passed down from generations, to us – the humble Aussie camper. Often though, the reason why some are yet to cook it is that they're unsure how.

You don't need a bread maker, Thermomix, or arsenal of kitchen utensils. There are loads of damper recipes online; but most of them require multiple ingredients and to work the dough for a few minutes. When you work damper too much though, it pushes all the air out and the result is a very dense dough.

So, with some trial and error, here's what we've found to be the best way to cook damper in a camp oven! The finished product is always perfect: crunchy on the outside, fluffy on the inside, and serves approximately four happy damper campers!



There's nothing like warm, campfire-cooked damper on a winter camping trip. Credit: Campfire

Classic Damper Ingredients:

- 2 x cups self-raising flour
- A pinch of salt
- Water

Optional Ingredients:

Sweet

- Lemonade instead of water
- Choc chips, or fruit and nuts

Savoury

- Beer instead of water
- Cheese and Italian herbs

Tools of the Trade:

- Camp oven (any size or material. The photos in this blog showcase a 9-Quart cast iron model)
- Long-handled shovel
- Long leather gloves
- A large kitchen knife



Your Campfire

The cooking process involves consistently replacing hot coals or heat beads, so ensure your campfire has an abundance!



The cooking process involves consistently replacing hot coals. Credit: David Leslie

Method:

1. In a bowl, add two cups of self-raising flour (approximately half a cup per person) and a pinch of salt.
2. Slowly add water and mix until ingredients start to combine and form a dough. This is the most important step, as you don't want to knead the dough; it needs to be left as is. Using your hands, cup the dough and slowly work it until a round damper shape is achieved.

Tip: If the dough sticks to your hands every time you pick it up, it is too moist – add more flour.



Mix – don't knead! Credit: Mick Viller

3. Add optional extras of choice.
4. Sprinkle the base of the camp oven with flour – or, cover a trivet with foil and lightly flour it. Place the damper on top, and the lid on the camp oven. Ensure there is a gap of at least 5cm between the damper and the walls of the oven all the way around.



The bun's in the oven! Credit: Mick Viller

5. Scatter about half a shovel of coals loosely on the ground next to the fire; a loose scattering is all that's needed.
6. Place the camp oven on the scattered coals, and scoop a full shovel of coals on top. You can also use heat beads; around 10 on the bottom, and 14 on the top (using a 9-Quart oven).

Tip: Never cook the damper in the fire, as it will easily burn.



You can also use heat beads; around 10 on the bottom, and 14 on the top. Credit: Mick Viller

7. Check the damper after 15 minutes, and every 10 minutes afterwards. It should need approximately 20–25 minutes of cooking time, depending on its size. Replace with fresh coals or heat beads on top each time.
8. Once golden and crusty on the outside, push a long knife through the middle. If the damper is cooked through, the knife will be clean when removed.

Tip: Another way to know that your damper is ready is if it sounds hollow when tapped.

9. Serve with your favourites spreads!



Once golden and crusty on the outside, your damper is ready! Credit: Mick Viller

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I get the perfect damper crust?

As long as you control your heat well enough, you shouldn't have a problem achieving a



crusty damper. However, camp ovens tend to retain moisture; when they do, it can be hard to achieve crispy vegetables, perfect crackling, or crunchy damper. The best way to release moisture is to crack the lid by placing a piece of wire (or similar), to allow the steam to escape.

Should I preheat my camp oven?

Some say you should, some say you shouldn't. [Mick Viller the Camp Oven Cook](#) choses not to preheat his camp oven.

For more on camp ovens, Ben and Lauren chat with Kingbrown (Ron Wilson) and Mick Viller on the [Snowys Camping Show](#):

What are the best spreads?

That's easy!

On a plain damper, you can't go past a good smothering of butter or margarine, and maple syrup. That said, experiment with your favourite spreads! Why not vegemite, hummus, jam, or honey? Try what you enjoy.

How big should my campfire be?

Generally, it's not the fire you're cooking with – it's the coals. If using coals: shovel them onto the ground beneath your camp oven, and add some more on top. Heat beads or briquettes are an alternative to coals.

You could even cook your damper on the [Ozpig](#)!

For how long does damper keep?

Damper turns stale quite quickly. As it's quick and cheap to make, prepare a loaf as you need it.

How versatile is damper?

Once you master the plain damper, don't be shy to experiment with other ingredients! Try adding bacon, cheese, and BBQ sauce for a savoury damper – or for sweet, you could add sultanas, brown sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg.

Damper for dinner is one way – but follow through at breakfast time with [the perfect camping pancake recipe](#)!



As it's quick and cheap to make, prepare a damper loaf as you need it. Credit: Mick Viller

What amazing flavour combinations have you created with your damper?