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Cast Iron - Initial Seasoning

There are many opinions on the “best way” to initially season your cast iron pan. We all cast iron, cover it with oil then bake it at a temperature that turns the oil into a hardened surface. Some users will argue for a certain type of oil, a certain oven temperature, a specific baking time, the exact number of oil layers, etc. Remember, there are many ways to achieve our common goal. Below you will find a simple initial seasoning process that is easy to follow and works every time. We will bake on the oil in a way that will leave a hardened coating giving you a wonderful nonstick surface.

Oils have different smoke points – which is the temperature where fats in the oil will burn off and smoke will be seen. We want to bake on the oil (called polymerization) using a refined oil and heat it under the smoke point so that it burns off cleanly. The oil’s smoke point changes if the oil is refined, unrefined, or even partially refined. It can sometimes be a challenge to know precisely what is in your oil and that can lead to confusion and poor results. The process below is simple, easy and foolproof - stick to refined oils and set the oven temperature under the smoke point.

Crisco shortening is great for initial cast iron seasoning and there is no confusion if you are buying the right oil. Crisco is inexpensive, stores well, pretty easy to find and works beautifully. Alternative refined oils are canola oil, peanut oil or grapeseed oil – the below instructions remain exactly the same.

Start with your pan ready for initial seasoning – clean and dry. See CastIronMagic.com if you need additional information.

Simple Initial Seasoning Instructions

Use paper towels to spread on oil and a lint free cloth to take it off.

We are going to bake on 3 layers of seasoning. The steps below take about 4 hours.

1. Preheat to 375 degrees F. After oven reaches 375 degrees F place pan into oven.
2. When the pan is hot - take pan out carefully and spread oil all over it. Use Crisco or the other oils mentioned above. Inside, outside, top and bottom (and handle). You do not need much and you will be wiping almost all of it off. Use a lint free cloth for this step (paper towels tend to shred) and take off everything you just put on. Buff the whole thing.
3. Place back in oven (upside down) but just for 15 minutes. If you buffed well - there should be just a sheen on the pan and certainly no oil pooling on the pan or dripping in the oven. Take it out and use the cloth *again* to buff the entire surface.
4. Place pan back in oven (upside down) for 1 hour. After 1 hour, if you took enough oil off during the buffing, it will be dry and not sticky. Perfect. If you left on too much oil – put the pan back in the oven until dry.
5. Repeat Steps 2 - 4.
6. Repeat Steps 2 - 4.
7. After the last layer has baked on, turn off the oven and let the pans cool inside.

This will give you a great base seasoning but remember this is the start of your seasoning process.

Follow the cooking, cleaning and maintenance guidelines on CastIronMagic.com and the seasoning will continue to improve over time. **Enjoy!**