

Cooking Progression

Progression is a common thread within the Girl Scout Program. We train the girls in the basics and keep adding more complex aspects of these basics. This list of cooking progression is by no means all-inclusive. It is meant to be a sampling from which to choose. After the initial Nosebag and One Pot Meals (*generally aimed at Brownies*) and simple stick cooking (*S'Mores*), the girls are ready to venture out into the other areas of this list. Below are some hints for each of these cooking types (taken from Troop 434's Outdoor Odyssey Cookbook, which is out of print.), which are roughly in order of difficulty.

- Nosebag
- One Pot Meals
- Stick Cooking
- Skillet/Griddle Cooking
- Grilling
- Foil Packets
- Dutch Oven Cooking
- Box Oven Cooking
- Solar Cooking

Nosebag

"Nosebag" refers to a bag filled with grain that fits over a horse's muzzle. In Girl Scouts, it generally refers to anything that can be carried with us and eaten on the way. Simple things such as a walking salad of carrots and celery sticks fit nicely into this category. Some Girl Scouts include sandwiches and cookie recipes in this list also for lack of another place to put them. Remember that if the weather is hot, recipes using mayonnaise should be avoided unless you have a way to keep it cool.

One Pot Meals

If you have a group that numbers more than about 8 or if appetites are unusually large, plan on using two pots on your cookstove for your "one pot" meals. A large Dutch oven is ideal (but that the one with the feet). The large pot of the standard nested camp cookware sets also works well.

One big advantage of a one-pot meal is that there is only one pot to clean. Therefore, I tend to avoid recipes where more than one pot is required (like pasta dishes where the pasta is cooked separately) when referring to "one pot" meals.

Stick Cooking

Stick cooking should be done over hot coals, not flames. Make sure that your coals are about the right temperature. To test for medium coals, place your hand above the coals about 6". If you can leave your hand there for 4 seconds, they are medium (3 seconds for medium-high).

One very common stick-cooking dish is kabobs. You can cook many of your favorite food combinations with your favorite marinades for tasty kabobs.

Skewers come in many sizes and styles. You may want to design your own. Wooden skewers are best used with quick cooking foods. Avoid the ones that are sold in craft stores rather than grocery stores as sometimes they have wood or oil that is toxic. Soaking wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes prior to use can help prevent them from burning. Avoid metal skewers that are round as the food often rolls on the skewer when you try to turn them. Some people prefer the skewer baskets but the ones that don't have non-stick coating need to be sprayed with cooking spray each time prior to using them. They do require more clean up than traditional skewers, however.

Skillet/Griddle Cooking

A portable cookstove (Coleman stove) is the best way to cook using this method as it provides the most even temperatures. You can also cook over coals using a cast iron skillet or Dutch oven. Make sure you have potholders for the skillet handy as the handle gets very hot when you cook this way. Cast iron cookware is best if cooking over coals as when properly treated it lasts a long time, handles the temperatures of fires well, and is easiest to clean.

Grilling

How much charcoal do I use? Actually, most people tend to use too much and thus waste the charcoal. Generally, you need about 30 briquettes to grill one pound of meat. You need enough charcoal in a single layer to extend 1"-2" beyond the sides of the cooking area. To determine your needs, spread the charcoal out. When ready to light, pile coals into a pyramid. Weber makes a good quality fire starter if you don't want to make your own. In general, a 10-pound bag of charcoal has about 150-180 briquettes. This should help you decide what size you need when you go to purchase your charcoal.

To adjust the heat for your grilling needs, if raising the cooking surface is not an option (which is generally true when camping), simply spread the coals or push them together depending on whether you wish to lower or raise the temperature (respectively). If you need to add more coals, add them to the outer edges of the hot coals. NEVER add charcoal lighter fluid to hot coals.

Foil Packets

Foil packets can be a fun alternative in outdoor cooking. One advantage is that many recipes may be prepared in advance, at home, then placed in the ice chest until time to cook. Also, there is minimal clean up. Our girls simply eat out of their foil, thus eliminating the need for doing dishes - a welcome relief!!

To be successful with foil packets, use heavy-duty foil, and put a layer of wet paper towels between two layers of foil. Have long handled tongs available but have the kind with rounded edges so you don't puncture the packets when turning them. Another good accessory is a good pair of heat-resistant oven mitts. Girls often want to eat out of the foil packet they made, so consider marking them with permanent markers (best to do **before** wrapping – since condensation from cold meat or vegetables can make it difficult afterwards.) Tip: label or draw design all over the foil.

Another key to successful foil packet cooking is how you fold the packets. You need to allow room for heat expansion. Use a piece of foil approximately 18"x12" for each serving. The best way to fold is using a drug store fold:

- Bring the long edges of the foil together and fold down 2-3 times leaving room above the food for expansion.
- Fold in each side 2 times and crimp to make a seal.

Generally, you cook with the seam side up but if the folds are secure, this allows you to turn the packets to avoid burning the bottom if you place them directly on the coals. Most recipes are best when cooked 4"-6" above medium coals. See Stick Cooking for information about coals and how to judge when they are "medium".

Dutch Oven Cooking



Dutch ovens are very versatile for cooking in the outdoors. You can make one pot meals as well as bake in them. Cast iron is preferable over aluminum to maximize its use. Dutch ovens intended for outdoor cooking have legs on the

bottom to raise the Dutch oven off of the coals and a dished lid on which to place the coals to provide the major portion of the heat. See picture at left.

New Dutch ovens need to be seasoned. Heat in the oven or inverted over coals and then wipe out. Wipe entire oven with a thin layer of oil. Store with lid removed.

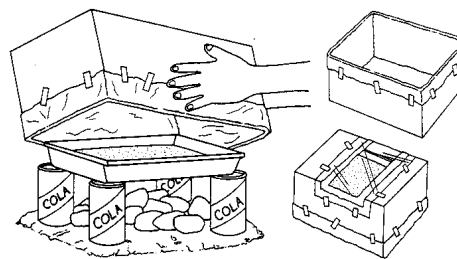
Cast iron cookware should never be washed in soap and water. Simply scrape out the leftover food and then wipe out with a paper towel. Oil the Dutch oven before storing it so it is ready for use the next time.

To simulate a 350 degree oven, remember the 2/3, +3, -3 rule. In other words, add 3 to the size of your Dutch oven for the number of briquettes to use on the top and subtract 3 from the size of the Dutch oven for the number of briquettes to use underneath. So, a 12" pot would require 9 briquettes below and 15 on top for 350 degrees. Then, bake for 2/3 of the recipe time and remove from bottom heat for the remainder. This helps to prevent burning.

You will need some sort of tool for lifting the lid. You will also find a shovel, some charcoal tongs, a small whiskbroom, and a putty knife handy when doing Dutch oven cooking.

Box Oven Cooking

Anything that can be baked can be fixed in a box oven. Generally, the most successfully things are those that don't cook too long (1 hour or less) because you will not need to add more coals during cooking to maintain the temperature.



How to make a box oven:

Take a large heavy-duty cardboard box - an apple crate works well. Line the inside with heavy-duty foil, shiny side out. Use duct tape to secure to side of box. Make sure it is as smooth as possible to fit over what you are cooking.

How to cook in a box oven:

Find a flat spot. Place 4 empty soda cans in a rectangle on the ground. Place a cookie sheet (that will fit when the box is inverted over it) on top of the cans and the pan that you are cooking in on top of that. Use an aluminum pie plate and place hot coals in pan and place between soda cans below cookie sheet. A charcoal briquette gives off about 40-50 degrees of heat; so, for baking at 350 degrees, use about 9-10 briquettes). Invert box over the assembly and place a small stick on the ground for the box to sit on to serve as a vent. See the illustration above (*illustration shows coals directly on the ground and also shows a viewing window fixed into the box oven, both of which are options*):

Solar Cooking

Solar cooking is fun to experiment with, especially since the food doesn't really burn. You can leave it for extended periods and let it cook.

Directions for making a solar cooker are included in many Girl Scout level handbooks. If you aren't that adventuresome, you can purchase one from Solar Cookers International. You can also make a portable solar cooker using a cardboard box cut in half diagonally, covering it in foil, then cooking in plastic oven bags.

Cookware for solar oven cooking should be black. The enamel camp ware works well. The 9" round is the ideal size for most recipes. Again, Solar Cookers International sells these pots.

You can cook most anything in a solar oven. Try your favorite recipe and cook twice as long as the recipe says. Soft vegetables, eggs, cheese, and precooked or ground meals cook very well and fast in the solar cooker. Meats and hard vegetables take longer. Make sure your solar oven is positioned to catch the most amount of sun, turning if necessary as the sun shifts. If you need to leave, position it so it will get most of the sun by placing in the sun's path estimating its halfway point while you're gone.

GETTING STARTED SAFELY WITH YOUR COOKING

Remember to check for any rules or regulations concerning cooking, stoves, and fires on your site.

DO NOT use liquid fire starters at any time. Directions to make alternate fire starters - "egg" fire starters and trench candles can be found on p. 54 of Outdoor Education in Girl Scouting.

SAFETY TIPS

a large blazing campfire wastes fuel and adds nothing to the enjoyment of the girls. Try a smaller one.

a supply of rubber bands for tying long hair back away from fires could be kept in the troop's First Aid Kit.

... several ways to waterproof matches:

1. coat with nail polish
2. coat with melted paraffin
3. store in watertight container

... long handled wooden spoons are very efficient for stirring food over a cook fire.

... fires should never be left unattended.

... always sprinkle water on a fire to extinguish it rather than pour, because.

- excessive smoke chokes
- hot scalding steam burns
- flying sparks could start a fire
- drowning fire spot makes future fire building difficult

be sure fire is completely out - PRACTICALLY OUT will not do!

... long handled tongs and heavy oven mitts are a must for firebuilders and cooks.

rocks composed of shale, slate or schist will explode when heated? Do NOT use this type of rock (layered composition) near fire.

... you should walk around a fire, never reach over it.

Dura-Flame logs or similar types of decorative fire logs are TOXIC and should not be used for cooking. Presto logs are O.K.

... charcoal must never be used in enclosed, unventilated area. Carbon monoxide gas is emitted by burning and smoldering charcoal, and toxic levels can build up quickly.

galvanized metal (i.e., garbage cans, buckets, etc.) can produce poisoning when used for cooking!