

How to clean a cast-iron skillet

Cleaning your cast-iron skillet is not a sit-and-soak job. You'll need to 'season' it first and the continuously clean it properly. We show you how.



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Even the most inexperienced cooks would do well to have a cast-iron skillet, one of the most versatile, relatively inexpensive, long-lasting and attractive pieces of cookware. Cast iron may take longer than other cookware to reach high temperatures, but it retains heat long after you remove it from the source. It also distributes the heat evenly.

But how do you clean a cast-iron skillet? Though it is not difficult, cleaning your cast-iron cookware is not a sit-and-soak job. To keep your cast-iron skillet in top shape, it is essential to “season” the piece before first use, and continuously clean it properly.

Seasoning your cast-iron skillet creates its non-stick surface, which is reinforced every time you use oil on the skillet – and as long as you follow proper cleaning procedure. To season the skillet (if you choose to buy one that is not pre-seasoned), coat it inside and out with vegetable shortening or cooking oil, and bake in a 350-degree oven for one hour. Remove the skillet (with oven mitts) and wipe the remaining oil or shortening off with paper towels. You're ready to cook!

So how do you clean your cast-iron skillet after your culinary masterpiece is finished? Some cooks do not ever wash their cast-iron pieces, choosing instead

to wipe them out with a soft cloth. But if you follow these steps to clean your cast-iron skillet, you will protect the seasoning – and all your recipes:

1. Rinse skillet under hot water. Some cast-iron skillet owners use a few drops of dish soap every so often. You can use a sponge or, if there is caked-on food or residue, pour coarse salt in the skillet and scrub with a clean cloth or paper towels.
2. Dry completely with a towel. To ensure that no moisture is left on the piece (which can lead to rusting), you can place it on the stove with low heat for a couple of minutes.
3. Before storing (preferably with the lid off, to prevent dust and moisture from settling on the cookware), you may want to coat the cast-iron skillet again with a layer of oil or shortening.

As for how *not* to clean your cast-iron skillet: Do not submerge it in water or put it in the dishwasher. Use only hot water, as running a hot skillet immediately under cold water can crack the finish.

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