

## Tips for Buying a Good Dutch Oven

Cast iron Dutch ovens are very useful and versatile cooking equipment. When Lewis and Clark's "Corps of Discovery Expedition" began canoeing up the Missouri River in the summer of 1803, they took a Dutch oven with them. After reaching the headwaters of the River, Corps team members carried their Dutch oven up and over the Rocky Mountains, on down to the Pacific Ocean. Their Dutch oven was so valuable they brought it back when they returned home in September 1806. Altogether, the explorers carried that same Dutch oven nearly 8000 miles!

If properly cared for, a high-quality Dutch oven will last for many decades. It even is possible to pass them down across generations in your family! Here are some tips to look for when purchasing one. In the U.S., one excellent brand is the Lodge company. They have been making very high-quality Dutch ovens in South Pittsburgh, TN (a small-town west of Chattanooga) since 1877. Here's their website for camping-style Dutch ovens:

<https://www.lodgemfg.com/shop?Material=Seasoned%20Cast%20Iron&Type=Outdoor%20%26%20Camping>

- Regardless of the manufacturer, look for a camping-style Dutch oven that has a vertical rim around the lid. This helps hold coals on top when you use it on open fires during camp outs. This feature will not interfere if you use the oven in your kitchen either. (I routinely use a couple of my camp Dutch ovens as day-to-day cooking pots in my home kitchen. They work great!)
- Also get an oven that has legs on the bottom. These stabilize the oven when cooking over an open fire with coals.
- Spend a few dollars more and buy a pre-seasoned oven. Seasoning helps keep foods from sticking. The Lodge website has more tips for caring for your Dutch oven.
- I suggest avoiding ovens made from aluminum or enameled Dutch ovens. They are not as versatile, especially if you want to use your oven both in the home kitchen and while cooking over open campfires.
- You might find good used cast iron Dutch ovens on-line, or perhaps in antique stores. Avoid buying used ovens that have any signs of serious damage (cracks, very bad rust, missing lids, etc.).

- Dutch ovens come in various sizes. Big deep ones are well-suited for roasts, bread baking, or other large-volume meals. Here is a photo showing my ovens (my biggest one is a 200<sup>th</sup> year anniversary commemorative edition to Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery). Notice the rims on the lids, and the 3 legs on the bottom of the upside-down smallest oven:



- Also consider buying outdoor campfire cooking accessories like study leather gloves, a lid lifter, and a chimney for starting charcoal. Here's a photo of mine:

