

The Cast Iron Tradition

Cast iron cooking is all in the seasoning. Here's how you do it. **BY LYNN COULTER**

For years, cast iron pans and skillets have been prized by everyday cooks and top chefs for their even heating and durability. Many of today's manufacturers sell preseasoned pans to give you a head start on building up the cookware's famous nonstick surface. But if you buy a new, unseasoned fryer or pick up a rusty griddle at a yard sale, don't worry. Just scrub the piece in hot, soapy water and rinse and dry it thoroughly.

Next, coat the cast iron lightly, inside and out, with melted vegetable oil. Preheat your oven to 350° and line the bottom of the oven with aluminum foil to catch any drips. Turn the cookware upside down and bake it on the lower rack for one hour. Turn off the oven and let the cast iron cool before removing it. Over time, its color will change from caramel brown to shiny black. Never wash cast iron in the dishwasher, and don't put hot pots directly into cold water, which can crack them.

To keep the seasoned surface, scrub your cast iron with a stiff brush and hot water after each use, but don't use harsh detergent. Rinse and dry the cookware, and while it's still warm, apply a little more vegetable oil or spray it lightly with cooking spray. Then store it in a dry, cool place.

Cast iron isn't old-fashioned just because generations before you used it. With a little care, it will last a lifetime.

GRILLED CHICKEN WITH CITRUS SALSA

- 2 jalapeño peppers, 1 sliced, 1 minced
- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 naval orange, peeled, sectioned and cut into ¼-inch pieces
- 1 small grapefruit, peeled, sectioned and cut into ¼-inch pieces
- 4 green onions, thinly sliced
- 10 red cherry tomatoes, seeded and diced
- Zest of ½ orange
- Zest of ½ lime
- 4 handfuls mixed greens

COMBINE jalapeño slices in a shallow bowl with ¼ cup each of the lime juice and olive oil. Rub chicken with salt and pepper, and add to the jalapeño marinade.

MARINATE in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes. In a medium-size bowl, combine orange, grapefruit, green onions, tomatoes, remaining tablespoon each of lime juice and olive oil, zests,



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salt, pepper and minced jalapeño. Set aside.

REMOVE chicken from marinade. Cook in greased, hot cast iron grill pan for 5 minutes on each side, or until cooked through. Remove and let stand 5 minutes. Divide greens among four plates.

SLICE chicken and arrange it on top of greens. Spoon salsa over each salad and serve immediately.

YIELD: 4 servings

MARTHA WHITE SOUTHERN SAUSAGE CORNBREAD

- ½ pound bulk pork sausage
- 1 egg
- 2 cups Martha White® Self-Rising Corn Meal Mix
- 1½ cups milk or 1¾ cups buttermilk
- ¼ cup oil or melted shortening

HEAT oven to 450°. In 10-inch cast iron skillet, cook sausage over medium heat until thoroughly cooked. Drain sausage. Wipe out skillet with paper towel. Grease skillet; place in oven to heat.

BEAT egg in medium bowl. Add cornmeal mix, milk and oil; stir until smooth. Stir in sausage. Batter should be pourable. If batter is too thick, add additional milk. Pour batter into hot skillet.

BAKE at 450° for 20 to 25 minutes until golden brown.

YIELD: 8 servings ●