

We love cooking in our masonry heater. Here are our tips on how to use your masonry heater for cooking based on our experience and some of our favourite recipes. We will expand the recipes over time.

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Introduction

Advantages of a cooking in a masonry heater

From our experience, we would say that the advantages are:

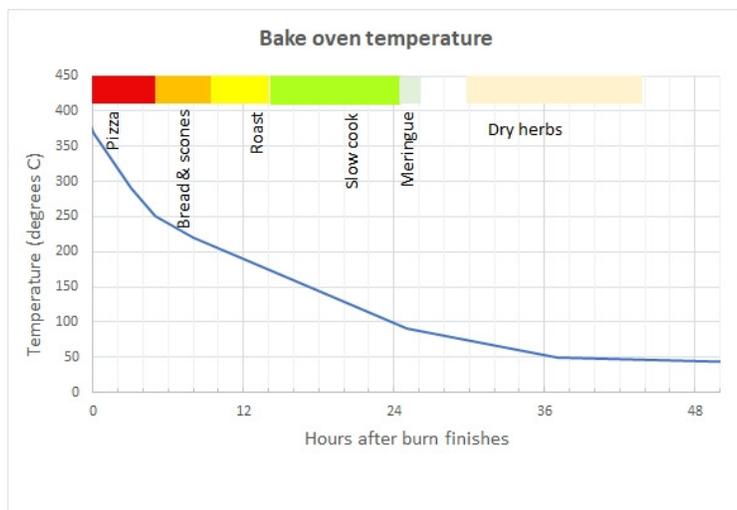
- High heat. The heat you get is much higher than a conventional stove. This lets you use a greater diversity of cooking methods.
- Flavour. You capture the flavour of wood burning in your food. We prefer it.
- Free. The heat is already there so there is no extra cost for fuel.
- Convenient. I love slow cooks (probably my favourite way of using the oven) – put the meal in at breakfast, forget it all day, pull it out at dinner and it is ready to eat.
- No mess. Nothing to clean up inside if you have spills, they will all burn away in the next fire.
- Kids love cooking in it. Cooking pizza (especially) and anything else in the bakeoven seems to have a special appeal for children and teenagers. Some of our customers have bought the bakeoven option so their children will bring friends to their place.

How the Bake Oven Works

The bake oven is a 'black' oven. This means the fire goes through it. So you can't cook while the fire is burning, you wait till you close it up and then you can cook for almost 40 hours after each burn.

Once the fire has finished and you close up the heater, you can start cooking. The temperature will start at 350°C (we have had it up to 400°C when we have used it for a couple of days consecutively). The speed at which the oven cools differs depending on how often you have burnt the heater lately (if several days consecutively, it cools more slowly as it already has lots of stored heat). So you need to get used to using it. The more frequently you open the bake oven door (to put pizza in and out), the more quickly it will cool.

The graph below gives you a good idea.



Start with things that need a high heat (pizza, bread), then medium heat (roasts), slow cook (casseroles, custard, meringue) and finish with drying tomatoes and herbs. You don't need special recipes, you can do

all your favourite recipes in the bakeoven. The ones in this recipe book are ones we make just to get you started.

Meat

Henry Dimbleby and John Vincent advise that to have tender meat, either cook it hot and fast or slow and gentle – in between may give you tough meat. They explain that this is because meat is made up of juicy muscle cells and connecting fibre (mainly collagen which is tough).

So hot and fast needs more expensive cuts with less connecting fibre. For these, the juicy muscle cells stay intact and keep their moisture. But if you cook the meet too long, the muscle cell will start breaking and lose the moisture it holds resulting in tough meat. This happens at a different temperature for different meat. So if you use a meat thermometer, inserted into the thickest part of the meat, you will always get the temperature right. In a masonry heater, the recipes in the section “The very hot oven” will be the best to use for this type of cooking.

Slow and gentle methods use cheaper cuts of meat which have more connecting fibre and need to be cooked longer to break this down. When they pass the internal temperature for perfectly cooked meat, the muscle cell bursts, releasing the moisture they contain. This makes the meat tough unless you keep cooking it in liquid so that the collagen breaks down and liquid is reabsorbed. This is most roasts, pot roasts and stews.

The Very Hot Oven

Pizza

If we are cooking pizza for dinner, we would usually light the heater at about 3 – 3.30pm and then it is ready for cooking by 6pm. Pizza goes in first. As soon as the fire has reached the coal stage, close the air intake and damper. Then put your pizza into the bakeoven. We use a metal pizza tray. The first one will cook quickly (maybe 3 - 5 min depending on the thickness of your base). As you open and close the door, the oven will cool and the last will take up to 15 minutes. The record was pizza for 60 people in one hour.

Alan's Pizza Base

Ingredients (for two 300mm pizzas)
700mm bread flour (or 00 flour if you can get it)
7gm sachet of dried yeast
350ml warm water
70ml extra virgin olive oil
½ teaspoon salt

Method

Mix dry ingredients, add water while stirring. Add the oil and mix, then knead until smooth.

Divide the dough into two and shape into balls. Roll out on a silicone mat or directly on a pizza tray, resting occasionally, until the required size. Spread with olive oil, place in a plastic bag and leave in a warm place until required.



Toppings for main course

Spread with- prepared tomato sauce or make some by sautéing a chopped onion until soft then adding peeled or tinned tomatoes and enriching with tomato puree and cooking until blended. Add herbs as desired (we add thyme, oregano, parsley, a little rosemary and black pepper). Then what goes on top is really up to you. We like:

- Sliced hot Hungarian salami.
- Sliced green or red pepper.
- Mushroom.
- Olives
- Grated cheese on top.

Place the pizza tray into the bakeoven (we put the tray directly on the floor of the bakeoven)

Toppings for dessert pizza

Or go for something different, like the dessert pizza

Lemon Dessert Pizza

This is one we made at the Masonry Heater Association conference in USA;

- Butter/bacon fat
- Thinly sliced lemon or orange (use ones with a thin skin)



- Icing sugar.

Generously cover the pizza bases with butter/bacon fat. Sprinkle with about ¼ cup icing sugar. Pop in the bakeoven till melted and bubbling (a few minutes). Cover with sliced lemon/orange (if you want, you could sprinkle five spices or a nutmeg and powdered cloves over the lemon and orange slices). Then sprinkle more icing sugar over the top and put back in oven till bubbling.

Chris's Pistachio Dessert Pizza

- 200 – 250g ricotta
- 30 – 50 g peeled pistachios
- 200g bocconcini or mozzarella
- ½ - 1 tsp nutmeg
- ½ orange and lemon
- 2 tbspn honey

Spread ricotta over the base. Then spread peeled pistachios over the ricotta (place them at most 2cm apart). Chop the bocconcini or mozzarella into smallish pieces (1-2 cm) and distribute fairly evenly on the pizza. Sprinkle with nutmeg and then grate the orange and lemon zest onto the pizza. Cook it without burning (<250 C is easier) till the lumps of bocconcini or mozzarella bubble.

Microwave the honey for 10 sec to make it more liquid. Then drizzle the honey and lemon juice over the pizza (or serve on plates and drizzle honey and lemon over it on the plate). Eat hot by itself or serve with icecream or cream.

Meat

We use the oven at a high temperature (basically as soon as the fire is out – same as pizza) for anything we would BBQ. BBQ pork spareribs took 8 minutes – beautiful (in the photo). Chops, steak, tandoori chicken all work well. Kebabs cooked on a rack as well (use metal skewers – not wood).

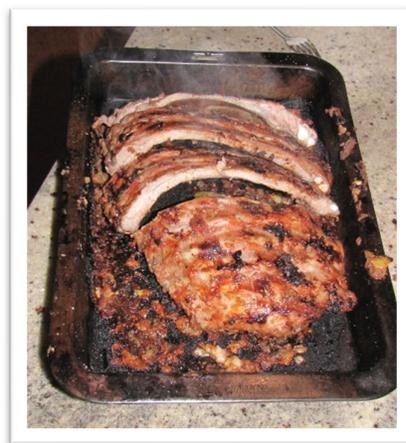
Use the same recipe you would use in your oven.

Bread

For bread, you will need an oven about 250°C. The bakeoven will take 1 – 3 hours to reach this after the fire reaches coals. If we are cooking bread, we would usually light the heater at about 3 – 3.30pm and then it is ready for cooking pizza by 6pm. After we cook and eat the pizza, it is time to put in the bread. We usually cook the bread in loaf tins, a metal pizza tray or terracotta flower pots. Use your favourite recipes. Here are the ones Alan uses.

Ingredients

- 1 kg bread flour
- 10g powdered dry yeast
- 20g salt
- 600ml warm water
- 1 tbspn butter



Method

Sift flour, yeast, and salt into a bowl. Add the water and butter. Mix together. Add a little more flour or water if needed to get the consistency right – it should be soft, kneadable and a little sticky. Work it into a ball and turn out onto the work surface.

Knead the dough for about 10min – it will become smooth and look like satin.

Shape the dough into a ball and put it into a bowl or bread basket. Cover with plastic (we use a bag and then reuse it. Leave it in a warm place (Alan often puts it on top of the heater) to rise till about double the size. The time will depend on how warm it is, usually 1 – 1.5 hours but sometimes more.

Tip the bread back onto the work surface and press it all over with your fingertips (to deflate the dough). Then reshape the dough and put back in the bowl/basket to rise again.

Divide the dough into 2 - 3 loaves or 10 – 12 rolls. Shape these into rounds, cover with a floured cloth (we use a clean tea towel) and leave to rest for about 10 – 15 minutes in a warm place (for us, back on top of the heater).

Now shape the loaf/rolls and put on a floured board or in the basket, cover with the plastic bag and leave to prove until they double in size.

Transfer to the tray, spray the surface with water, then put into the oven and cook until they are brown and feel hollow when you tap them. This will take about 10 – 20 min for rolls, 30 – 40 min for small loaves and 40 – 50 min for large loaves.

Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

Scones

For scones, you need an oven about 200 - 220 °C – a little cooler than the bread. The bakeoven will take 2 – 3 hours to reach this after the fire reaches coals.

Ingredients

1 egg
½ cup milk
2 cups SR flour
1 tspn sugar
2 tspn butter
Pinch salt

Method

Sift flour, sugar & salt three times. Rub in butter.
Beat egg, add milk to make up to ½ cup.
Mix the liquid into flour.

Pat out gently (about 2cm thick), don't knead them as this makes tough scones. Cut to shape (use a floured glass or cutter). Place on greased and floured baking tray and then put into the masonry heater when it is about 200°C – 220 °C. Cook for 10 – 15 min till brown.

Remove tray and cool scones on a rack. Eat when warm or cool.



Self-Crusting Quiche

This also uses an oven about 200 - 220 °C – a little cooler than the bread. The bakeoven will take 2 – 3 hours to reach this after the fire reaches coals.

This is a recipe we cook to use up left over vegetables or the ends of cheese. It is really flexible and always good.

Ingredients

1-2 onions
3 eggs
1 cup cream and milk (the more cream, the richer the quiche and also the quicker to cook)
½ c SR flour
Herbs, salt and pepper
½ - 1 c grated cheese (or all the little bits that are left over)
1 – 2 c cooked vegetables (we often just use mushrooms, otherwise whatever is in the fridge)

Method

Line a pie dish/flan tin with baking paper.

Fry the onions and herbs till the onions are soft and steam the vegetables if not already cooked. Remove as much water from the steamed vegetables as possible.

Pread the vegetables across the base of the dish.

Mix the eggs, cream and milk, salt and pepper. Add grated stir enough to mix it in. Sift in the flour and stir enough to combine well but no more (if you stir it lots, the mixture doesn't separate into crust and filling).

Pour the mixture over the vegetables and spread it evenly if necessary. You can sprinkle grated cheese on top as well if you like.

Bake at about 220°C for 20 – 30 minutes until firm in the centre and light brown. Serve

The Medium Oven

Roasts

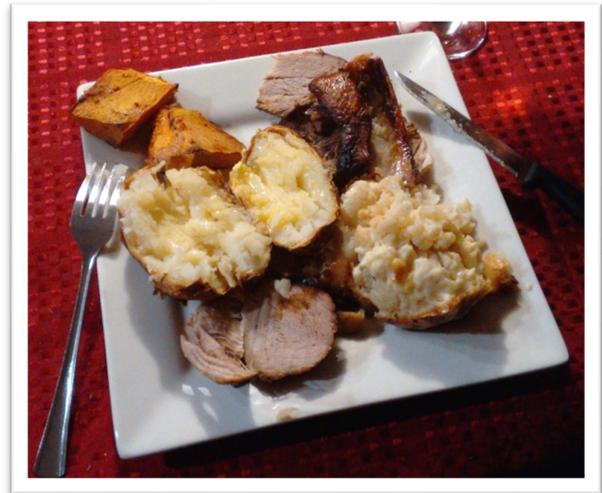
From the time you close up your heater, it will be about 3 hours before it is ready to use to roast. If you like your meat rare, then you would put it in earlier and leave in for less time. Fiona doesn't like rare meat, so that isn't us. We would normally light the fire at 12 – 1pm to eat at 6 – 7pm.

The type of meats that work well are those that need a constant temperature rather than something where you drop the temperature after a while (like pork with crackling). We do beef, lamb and chicken. When we roast pork, we generally put the crackling in earlier to give it an extra boost at a higher temperature. We do roast turkey as a slow cook (we will put the recipe in this in time for your Christmas dinner).

The advantage of a roast in the masonry heater is that it is a constant temperature, uniform on all sides (so a bit like a fan forced effect) and you have a caramelised surface for the food.

To cook, we use any of our normal recipes, and then put it on a rack in the bake oven. We find the rack helps the air circulate around it well.

Baked potatoes are also good. Fiona has been known to wrap these in foil and put in the bake oven when it is still a hot oven.



Braised Short Ribs

We light the fire in the morning and then put this in the afternoon (about 3 or 4 pm) when the oven will be 150 – 170 °C.

Ingredients (serves 4)

- ½ c hoisin sauce
- 1 c beef stock
- ¼ c brown sugar
- 5 cm fresh ginger (grated)
- 2 cloves garlic (garlic)
- 2 star anise (optional)
- ½ orange juice
- Orange rind
- 1 chilli chopped
- 2 kg pork spare/beef ribs

Method

Combine all ingredients (except meat) in oven proof pot. Mix well. Add meat and turn to coat meat. Cover. Cook for about 2 hours. Turn the meat and return to



bakeoven without the lid. Cook for another ½ hour. Remove much of the sauce and put in a saucepan and reduce the sauce (return baking dish and chops to oven). At the same time, put on rice to serve with the chops. 5

When the rice is done, serve the chops with sauce and rice. We serve with bok choy.

The Slow Oven

We generally light our heater at night after dinner. By 10pm it has finished and we go to bed. Alternatively, we light it earlier (about 3 – 3.30pm) and cook pizza. The next morning, the bakeoven will be 130 – 150 °C. We put the slow cook meat dishes in after breakfast and it is done for dinner. Quite literally, we set and forget till we pull it out to eat that night.

For deserts we wait till the temperature is lower – around 100 - 110 °C

Use your favourite slow cook recipes. Here are some of ours.

Meat

Slow Cook Beef

Use your favourite pot roast and stew recipes. The difference between pot roasts and stews seems to be that pot roasts: use bigger pieces of meat (usually a whole joint rather than cubes), often include vegetables only for presentation rather than as part of the recipe (in stews they often thicken the sauce), take longer to cook because they are bigger pieces of meat and have less gravy/sauce.

We make a lot of variations on both, but there are a few general things we always do. Here they are:

1. Sear your meat (use a tough cut that needs slow cooking) over a high heat whether it is a single piece or small cubes. We do this in a fry pan on the stove (in dripping or oil) and then put it into the pot used for slow cooking. It should be dark brown.
2. Use some of the liquid in the recipe to deglaze the frying pan and add that to the pot.
3. Add vegetables. With very few exceptions, we always include onion, carrot and a few sticks of celery. Sometimes we include tomato. Sometimes we swap carrot for beetroot or (in curry) pumpkin. Don't add too many – keep it simple.
4. Add herbs. Generally, parsley, thyme, bay and oregano (sometimes a little rosemary).
5. Add liquid. This can be stock, wine, apple cider (this is how I use my home-made apple and pear cider) or a mix.
6. If I don't use real stock (made with bones), I will often add bones (or a pork trotter or ham hock) to the cooking and remove at serving time. This adds gelatine which helps the texture of the food.
7. Add fat if the meat is fairly low in fat. We generally use dripping, but it can be butter, pork fat, olive oil, etc.
8. You can add a bottle of chutney or relish for flavour.
9. If the liquid is too runny at the end, remove some from the pot and reduce it over a high heat. Then serve the meat with this.
10. You can also add dried beans (pre-soaked) at the start or pasta (near the end).



If you have the heater in at night, pop your slow cook in at breakfast and it will be ready for you that night. If you use the heater in the morning, then you can pop your slow cook in that night to cook overnight. Leave it to rest during the day and reheat slowly the next night (most slow cook meats will improve if left for a day before eating).

Choose a solid pot that is ovenproof. I have an old campoven I use when doing large amounts and a smaller Le Creuset pot when doing smaller amounts. I usually warm it before going into the oven – why I don't know, but I do.

Hungarian Goulash

This is our favourite slow cook meat recipe.

Ingredients (serves 6)

1 kg stewing beef cut into large cubes
½ c plain flour
1 tbspn sweet paprika
2 tspn caraway seeds
½ tspn cayenne pepper
2 tbspn olive oil
20g butter
1 large brown onion
2 cloves garlic
2 tbspn tomato paste
1½ c beef stock
400g tinned tomato
350 g potato, chopped into large pieces
250 g carrot, chopped into large pieces
½ c yoghurt/sour cream
¼ - ½ c chopped parsley



Method

Mix the spices and flour. Toss meat in flour and spice.

Add oil and butter to pan and sear meat in frying pan. Place in pot.

Fry onion and garlic till soft, stir in the remaining flour and cook for 1 – 2 minutes. Add to pot. Stir in tomato paste, tomato, stock, potato and carrot.

Put on lid of pot and bring to boil. Put in bakeoven and cook for 6 – 8 hours.

Serve with yoghurt/sour cream and sprinkle with finely chopped parsley.

Beef Cheeks

Ingredients

1.5 kg beef cheeks (or other stewing meat)
3 tbspn dripping
4 cloves garlic
1 onion
1 carrot
1 stalk celery
2 cup red wine
Pinch salt & pepper
4 thyme stems
6 bay leaves

Method

Sear meat in frying pan. Place in pot.

Fry onion and celery till soft. Add to pot.

Deglaze the frying pan with a little of the wine and add to pot, along with the rest of the wine.

Add herbs and salt and pepper.

Put on lid of pot and bring to boil. Put in bakeoven and cook for 5 – 7 hours.

Remove meat from the sauce. Puree the liquid to a smooth sauce and reduce by $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ (about 10min). Taste and adjust seasoning. Serve meat with the sauce.

Andrew's Beef and Guinness

Ingredients

1 kg diced stewing steak
Fat for searing meat
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbspn flour
1 onion chopped
3 stalks celery chopped
4 cloves garlic
4 bay leaves
1 tspn thyme
Salt and pepper to taste
120g button mushrooms
3 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups beef stock
450 ml Guinness stout
1 tbspn tomato paste

Method

Toss meat in flour. Sear in frying pan. Place in pot.

Fry onion and celery till soft. Add to pot.

Add herbs and salt and pepper.

Add stock, Guinness and stock. Bring to boil. Put in bakeoven and cook for 5 – 7 hours.

Osso Bucco (serves 4)

Ingredients

1.2 kg osso bucco (about 4 pieces) or 0.8 – 1kg stewing steak cut into large pieces
 $\frac{1}{4}$ c plain flour
2 tbspn oil/dripping
 $\frac{2}{3}$ c marsala or red wine
 $\frac{1}{6}$ c (40ml) worcestershire sauce
1 c beef stock
1.5 tbspn wholegrain mustard
2 sprigs fresh rosemary
350g mushrooms cut into chunks

1/3 c yoghurt/cream
1 dsrtspn gravox
1/4c chopped parsley

Method

Toss meat in flour. Heat half the dripping or oil in pan and brown meat in this. Place in pot ideally in a single layer.

Heat the remaining dripping or oil in the pan and cook the onion in this till soft. Add onion to the pot. Add wine/masala, worcestershire sauce, stock, mustard and rosemary to the pot. Put in bakeoven and cook for 6 – 8 hours.

Remove the meat from the pot and then reduce the liquid slightly if very thin.

Put the gravox in a cup and stir in some of the liquid from the pot (to avoid lumps). Stir into the yoghurt mix more liquid and then pour this back into the pot. Place on a cook top. Boil to thicken slightly, stirring occasionally (about 10min). Stir in yoghurt/cream.

Serve the meat with the mushroom sauce.

Pot roasts

With a pot roast, you put everything in the pot and then put this in the oven and pull it out when done. Nothing easier.

Use your existing recipes or the ones that follow as a base. Then modify them as you like.

Fiona's Rolled Meat

Ingredients

1 kg roll of stewing steak
3 tbspn dripping
3 tbspn dry mustard
1 cup red wine
3 slices bacon
1 onion
Rosemary

Method

Coat the roll of meat in the mustard. Sear the meat on all sides in the dripping. Place in pot. Deglaze the pan with the red wine and add to the pot. Place slices of bacon over the top. Cover the pot. Bring to boil. Put in bakeoven and cook for 5 – 7 hours.



Monica's Pot Roast

Ingredients

1 kg roll of stewing steak
1 onion

1 sprig rosemary
2 cloves garlic crushed
1 tbspn balsamic vinegar
1 c stock
Dripping or butter to sear the meat

Method

Sear the meat on all sides in the dripping/butter (about 10 min) and remove from pot.

Add the onion, rosemary and garlic and brown. Add the balsamic vinegar and stock. Stir to scrape up all the caramelised pices in the pan. Add the meat, stock and sufficient water to cover the meat.

Put in bakeoven and cook for 3 - 5 hours. (I think longer)

Marinated beef

For tough cuts, marinating for 4 hours or overnight will help tenderise the meat before cooking. In a masonry heater, my method is always the same, just the marinade differs. Here is the method I use and some examples.

Method

We usually fire the heater at night, prepare the marinade and marinate the meat overnight, and then put it in to cook at breakfast.

Place the meat in either the pan you will use to cook it or a glass/ceramic container. Mix all the marinade ingredients and pour over and marinate (at least 4 hours).

Brown the meat (or do at end, where it is not well coloured). Transfer the meat to an oven proof dish (if not marinated in this dish) and cook for 6-8 hours starting when the oven is at 120 - 150 °C (the recipe is very forgiving – so if we will be out during the day, I tend to put it in after breakfast and pull out at dinner).

Remove the meat and brown if not already done. Rest it for 30min.

Strain the pan juices and then reduce if necessary (or thin with the liquid used in the marinade – wine, beer, cider, stock, juice, ...). Serve the reduced juices as a sauce with the meat.

Marinade Ingredients

For 1 - 2 kg roll of stewing steak

Asian style

5 cm fresh ginger chopped finely
2 cloves garlic crushed
2 tbspn honey
1 tbspn oil
¼ c dark soya sauce

Italian style

½ c apple cider/wine/verjuice
½ c olive oil



1 sprig rosemary
2 bay leaves
Peel from 1 lemon and 1 orange (sliced finely)
Pepper & salt

Vegetarian

Yellow Pea Dhal

Ingredients (Serves 6)

500g yellow split peas
45g butter/oil
2 onion, finely chopped (about 300g)
3 cloves garlic, crushes
4cm fresh ginger
1 tspn ground coriander
2 tspn mustard seed
2 tspn turmeric
1 tspn dried chilli flakes (or a whole chilli chopped)
1 tspn cumin seed
1 tspn garam masala
88g tinned tomato
3c vegetable stock
1 ½ c water
1 tspn sugar
4 silver beet leaves chopped



Method

Rinse split peas till the water runs clear.

Heat butter in pan and add onion, garlic, ginger and chilli. Cook (stirring) until the onion is soft. Add the mustard and cumin seed, tumeric and garam masla. Cook till the spices become fragrant (stir and watch to avoid burning the spices).

Place in a oven proof dish with lid. Add the tinned tomatoes, stock, water, sugar and split peas.

Place in bakeoven and cook for 8 – 10 hours .

Stir in silver beet when ready to serve. (This freezes well prior to inclusion of the silver beet – better to add this at serving).

Black bean gumbo

Ingredients (Serves 4 - 5)

200g dried black/black eyed beans
1 onion (finely chopped)

2 celery sticks (finely chopped)
2 cloves garlic crushed
1 or 2 red chilli
150ml vegetable stock
800g tinned tomato
1 tspn dried thyme
1 tspn cayenne pepper
1 tspn dried oregano
½ tspn white pepper
Pinch salt
200 g baby spinach leaves (optional)

Method

Soak the beans overnight in cold water. Drain and place in ovenproof dish with lid.

Add onion, celery, garlic, chilli, vegetable stock, tomato and herbs. Cover with the lid. Cook in bakeoven for about 8 hours (anywhere from 6 to 10 is fine).

When ready to serve, stir in baby spinach leaves if using, seaspn to taste with salt and serve. We serve with couscous, rice, nachos or tortllas.

We freeze leftover in meal size portions and use as a quick meal. You can also puree and dilute with more stock and serve as a soup.



Soup

Minestrone (serves 4 – 6)

Ingredients

100g dried cannellini beans (soak overnight and boil for 10 min)
2 celery sticks
2 carrots
1 onion
400g tomatoes
3c chicken/vegetable stock
60g small pasta pieces
4 tbspn flat-leaf parsley
40g parmesan cheese grated
2 tbspn olive oil

Method

Finely chop all vegetables. Heat the oil. Finely chop onion, celery and carrots and cook for 5 minutes till soft. Stir in tomato and boil gently. Then put vegetables, beans and stock in oven proof dish, stir and cover with lid. Cook for 6 – 8 hours.

Add pasta for the last 15 min. Stir in parsley and half the parmesan cheese, taste and season as necessary.

Serve hot in bowls sprinkled with remaining Parmesan. Cook at around 100 degrees

Carrot and Ginger Soup (serves 6)

Ingredients

1 onion chopped finely
15g butter
1 tbspn oil
75 g red lentils
500 g carrots – chopped
3.5 cm fresh ginger peeled and finely chopped
3 tspns curry paste
1.2 l vegetable stock
300ml milk
Salt & pepper

Method

Heat the butter and oil. Fry the onion in this. Then put in oven proof dish.

Add all the ingredients except the milk to the oven proof dish. Stir. Cover.

Cook in bake oven for 4 – 5 hours.

Either eat as is or puree for a smooth soup (the soup freezes well at this stage).

Add the milk and cook for about 15 minutes (till heated). pServe.