

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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## Advantages of a cooking in a masonry heater

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

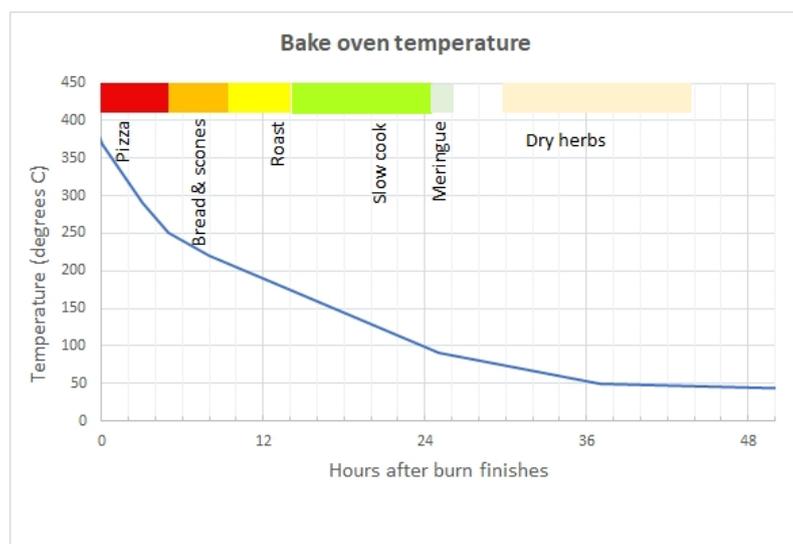
- High heat. The heat you get is much higher than a conventional stove. This lets you use a greater diversity of cooking methods.
- Flavour. You capture the flavour of wood burning in your food. We prefer it.
- Free. The heat is already there so there is no extra cost for fuel.
- Convenient. I love slow cooks – 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 herbs. You don't need special recipes, you can do all your favourite recipes in the bakeoven.

## 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 Lemon Dessert Pizza

Or go for something different, like the dessert pizza 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. Then sprinkle more icing sugar over the top.

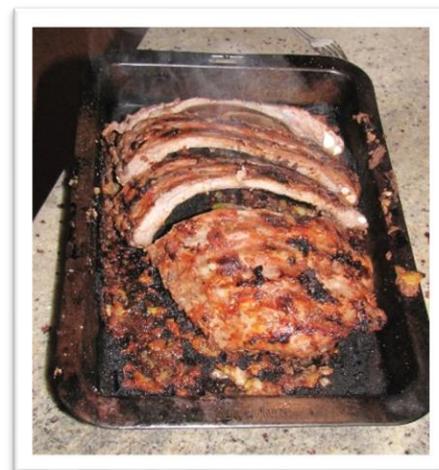
### Meat

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 & Scones

For bread and scones, 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.



### Bread

#### 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.



## 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 longer. 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.



## 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 in after breakfast and it is done for dinner. Quite literally, we set and forget till we pull it out to eat that night.

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

### Meat

#### Slow Cook Beef

We make a lot of variations, 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.
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 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.

## 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.

## 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.



### **Andrew's Beef and Guinness**

#### **Ingredients**

1 kg diced stewing steak  
Fat for searing meat  
1 ½ tspn 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 ½ cups beef stock  
450 ml Guinness stout  
1 tspn 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.

## **Baked Custards**

### **Ingredients**

4 eggs + 2 yolks  
2 ¼ c milk  
2 tbspn sugar  
2- 3 drops vanilla essence  
Nutmeg

### **Method**

Place milk in a saucepan, add the sugar. Heat the milk and sugar mixture almost to boiling and then cool slightly. Mix in the eggs and extra yolks. Do this lightly to avoid frothing. Strain through a sieve to remove egg 'threads'. Add the vanilla and stir. Pour into a pie dish and sprinkle with nutmeg.

Place the pie dish in a larger pan of hot water and then place this in the bakeoven to cook. It will take 40 – 50 min.