

Forno Bravo, LLC
Wood-Fired Cooking

An Operating Guide and Cookbook for
Your Forno Bravo Pizza Oven
Operating Guide

**A MAJOR CAUSE OF OVEN-RELATED FIRES IS FAILURE TO MAINTAIN REQUIRED
CLEARANCES (AIR SPACES) TO COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS. IT IS OF UTMOST
IMPORTANCE THAT THIS OVEN BE INSTALLED ONLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THESE
INSTRUCTIONS**

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WARNING

READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE INSTALLING AND USING THE APPLIANCE.

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Failure to heed this warning may result in damage to property, bodily injury or death.

Keep children and pets away from hot oven.

Use firewood for burning only. DO NOT use charcoal, pressure treated lumber, chipped wood products, sappy wood such as pine, laminated wood or any material other than dry medium or hard firewood.

DO NOT USE liquid fuel (fire lighter fluid, gasoline, lantern oil, kerosene or similar liquids) to start or maintain a fire.

BEWARE of very high temperatures in the oven and use long oven gloves and mitts to handle pots and tools. DO NOT put unprotected hands or arms inside oven while it is lit.

Dispose of ashes using a metal shovel and place in a metal bin with a tightly fitting lid. The container should be stored on a non-combustible surface, away from all combustible materials. Ensure ashes are completely cold before disposing of them appropriately.

BEWARE of flying sparks from mouth of oven. Ensure that no combustible materials are within range of oven at any time.

DO NOT close the oven door fully while a fire is in the oven. Closing the door fully will cut off oxygen to the fire, causing the fire to erupt suddenly when the door is removed. Always keep door tilted to allow air to circulate in the oven.

DO NOT use water to dampen or extinguish fire in the oven.

FIRE can result from incorrect installation or use of this oven. It is essential to use only building and insulation materials designed for the purpose.

Contact your local building department for clarification on any restrictions on installation of this oven in your area.

Follow the instructions for curing the oven. Failure to follow the curing schedule can cause damage to the oven.

SAVE THESE INSTRUCTIONS

Acknowledgements

We want to thank the Forno Bravo community for its help in producing this *Wood-Fired Cooking* e-Book. Contributions from Forno Bravo Forum members have proven invaluable to this e-Book, and to the other Forno Bravo publications, including *Wood-Fired Bread*, *The Pompeii Oven*, and the forthcoming *Wood-Fired Pizza*. We greatly appreciate not only your ideas and recipes, and even more, the strong sense of community, sharing, and humor.

James Bairey

March 2007

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1. An Introduction to Wood-Fired Cooking

Cooking in a wood-fired pizza oven is one of life's great pleasures. Few things compare with the experience of firing your oven, watching the flames heat the oven dome, feeling the heat of the oven on your face, and cooking some of the world's best pizza, bread and roasts in your own brick oven. We think you will find that your pizza oven quickly becomes the focal point for family entertaining, and even weekday cooking. We know many brick oven owners who say that they have never lit their propane grill after installing a wood-fired oven. It's that fun, and the food is that good.



The range of dishes you can cook in your Forno Bravo oven is virtually unlimited. You can bake pizza and bread, and you can roast, bake, braise, slow cook, and grill meat, vegetables, appetizers, and desserts. With a little practice, you can cook just about anything in a wood-fired oven, and the best part is that every dish you cook in your Forno Bravo oven will turn out better than it ever did in your conventional oven. In fact over time, we think you will find that there are some dishes that you will only cook in your brick oven – because they are so much better when they are wood-fired. That is why *Forno Bravo Wood-Fired Cooking* has techniques and recipes on a wide range of dishes. We want you to get the most from your wood-fired oven.

Italian cooking and wood-fired brick oven recipes are typically not terribly complicated. You tend to cook dishes

quickly, after doing much of your preparation in the kitchen, or on a counter near your oven. Some dishes require that you take your baking pan out of the brick oven several times, while some ask you to check and turn your food once or twice. Many recipes simply have you set your food in the oven, and let it go.



Our goal with *Wood-Fired Cooking* is to keep our recipes and preparation straightforward and accessible, so that you will use your oven for everything. If you live in a warm place, as we do, you can use your brick oven every day in the summer—just to keep from having to cook inside the house. We hope this cookbook will help you try new things, and do more with your Forno Bravo oven.



Each of the *Forno Bravo Cooking* recipes is designed to take advantage of the way your brick oven can cook simultaneously from above, with reflective dome heat; and

from below, with heat retained in the cooking surface and in your pans; plus with natural convection—to produce great results. The next chapter describes how your Forno Bravo oven works, and how it cooks.

One note. Wood-fired recipes are less rigid and exact than those for a conventional oven. Controlling temperature and judging cooking time are not as exact either, so you will have to learn how your oven cooks, how hot you want your oven to be when cooking, and how long your favorite recipes take to cook.

The good news is that brick oven cooking is very forgiving. Because you are cooking with a higher temperature, and with moist heat (as opposed to the dry air that a conventional convection oven creates), your food will always be moist on the inside, and sealed and well browned on the outside. Because it's more difficult to overcook food, including chicken, casseroles and roasts, your Forno Bravo oven actually makes it easier to serve great food.



Later, when you are finished cooking for the evening, pull your fire forward while you eat, and enjoy watching the flames. Your Forno Bravo oven is also a great fireplace.

And remember, before you retire, don't forget to close the oven door to hold in heat for any slow cooking you want to do the next day.

Finally, we want to note that *Forno Bravo Wood-Fired Cooking* is one in a series of wood-fired e-Cookbooks. You can download *Forno Bravo Wood-Fired Bread* and *Forno*

Bravo Wood-Fired Pizza from the Forno Bravo Store. They contain techniques and recipes for making great hearth bread and the world's best pizza, and they are both freely available.

We hope you enjoy your oven, and wish you good health, good cooking and wonderful eating.

Saluti,
Forno Bravo

2. How Your Forno Bravo Oven Works

Wood-fired ovens use retained heat, a live fire and hot coals to create different cooking environments, including:

- Fire-in-the-oven
- Coals-in-the-oven
- Retained heat

We will describe the mechanics of how your oven works in this section, and then describe the different wood-fired cooking styles in the following section.

Fire-in-the-oven Cooking

When cooking with a live fire, your Forno Bravo oven cooks simultaneously in three ways, as shown in the following three graphics:

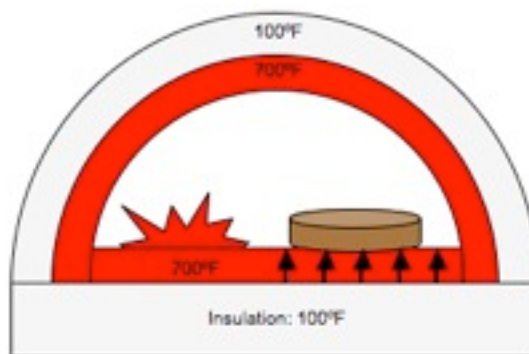
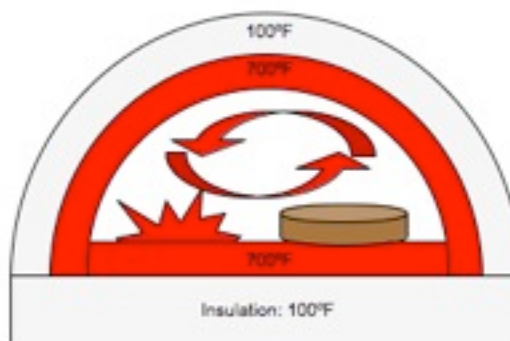
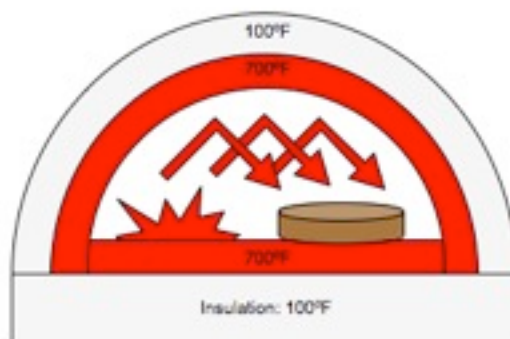
- Reflected heat
- Convection
- Conductive heat
-

With reflective heat, flame from a live fire is bounced off the dome onto your food. This reflective heat cooks food, such as pizza, and also recharges the cooking floor, putting heat back into the floor to replace heat that is lost through cooking.

Because your Forno Bravo oven breathes, drawing in cold air through the lower half of the oven opening and exhausting hot air out the top half of the opening, it is constantly moving hot, moist air across the top of your food. While modern convection ovens use fans and heat coils to move hot, dry air within the oven, nothing can compare with natural convection.

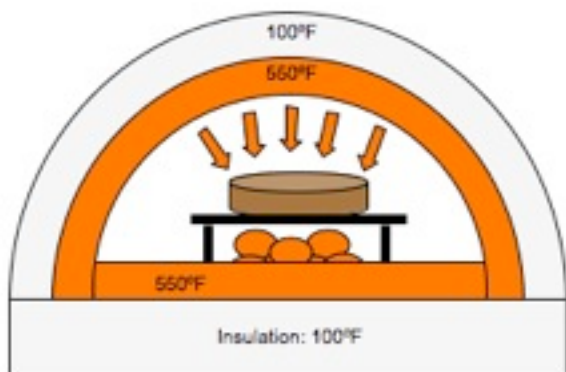
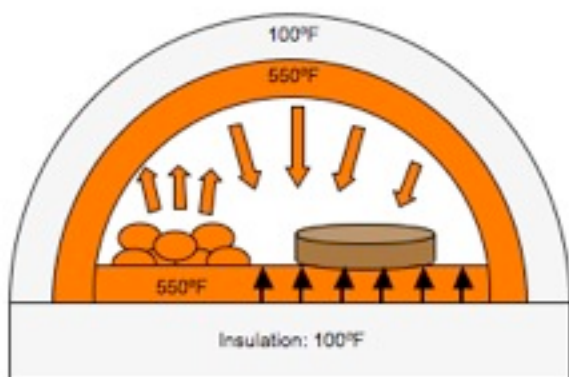
Finally, heat stored in the cooking floor is transferred directly into food that is set on top of it. This is true for bread and pizza, which are set directly on the cooking floor, and for pots and pans set on it.

It is this unique cooking ability that let's you make Italian pizza, hearth bread and great roasts in your Forno Bravo oven, and what makes wood-fired cooking unlike any other type of cooking.



Coals-in-the-oven

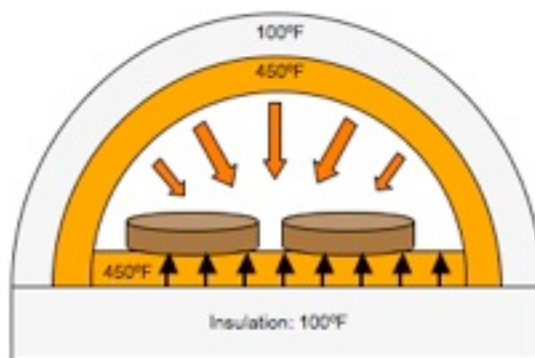
There are many dishes that do not need, or want, the high heat of a live fire and a very hot 700°F oven. For this type of cooking, let your fire die down and allow your oven to cool. You can use the heat of the coals and a hot oven to roast, brown, sear, and grill, and to ensure that your oven will retain enough heat for longer periods of cooking.



Retained Heat Cooking

For baking bread and other dishes at temperatures where you would normally cook in a conventional oven, your oven will cook for hours with retained heat. You should rake out the coals from the fire, and then close the oven door to let the oven temperature moderate.

With this type of cooking, you can bake bread, desserts and small roasts, and as the oven temperature falls, you can slow cook beans, soups and stews, and long-cooking meats and ribs.



3. Types of Wood-Fired Cooking

Your Forno Bravo oven is capable of an almost endless variety of cooking styles. With almost all types of cooking, you should bring your oven fully up to heat, and then prepare it for the type of cooking you want to do by moving the fire and coals to one side of the oven, and then letting the oven temperature reach the range where you will be cooking. How long you fire your oven depends on how much cooking you will be doing, and how long you want your oven to hold its heat.

Remember that you can only take out heat from the oven that you put in. If you are going to be cooking a lot of pizza for a large party, or baking lots of bread or a large roast, fire your oven longer. If you are making pizza for the family for a mid-week meal, you can fire your oven for a shorter time—typically only until the dome goes white.

The main cooking styles are:

Fire-in-the-oven Cooking

Fire-in-the-oven cooking (650°F and up) is used for baking pizza, pizza-like flatbreads and certain types of appetizers, all of which cook in a couple of minutes. Your Forno Bravo Pizza Oven can be pizza-ready in about 45 minutes, using 7-8 pieces of 3"-4" diameter wood. The goal with this type of cooking is to completely fill the floor and dome with heat, build up a large sized bed of coals and maintain a large fire where the flame reaches to top of the dome.



There are two ways to know that an oven is ready to cook pizza. First, when the oven dome itself has gone clear, and there is no visible black soot. At this point, you should move the fire to one side, while continuing to maintain a large fire going with the flame reaching the middle of the oven.

Alternatively, if you are using an infrared thermometer, the floor should read approximately 650°F-700°F. Pizzas are baked right on the floor next to the fire. Leave the oven completely open, and add one piece of wood every 15-20 minutes to maintain a large flame.



For a visual description of how your Forno Bravo oven is absorbing, holding and using heat to cook, see Chapter 3, How Heat Works.

Roasting (at higher heat than baking)

When you want to sear meats, brown vegetables or casseroles before covering them with a lid or with liquid, or you want a dish to cook completely before the outside burns or becomes too brown, you should use a roasting temperature of between 600°F and 450°F. This range is lower than for high heat fire-in-the-oven pizza cooking, but higher than for traditional baking. In order to roast, first bring you oven up to pizza temperature, and then allow it to drop in temperature and the fire to burn down but not out. Push the coals to one side.



Read the *Forno Bravo Wood-Fired Bread* e-Cookbook for more information on bread baking techniques and recipes.

The fully fired oven combined with a low fire, enables you to sear and brown dishes, and then allows the oven to slowly drop in temperature for longer cooking. There should be no visible black on the dome, a medium sized bed of coals and a small flame of 2"-4" high. The door may be left off for shorter roasting times (under one hour) or positioned inside the arch opening to help regulate the heat for hours of roasting. Add small pieces of wood as needed to maintain temperature. You can move your pans around inside the oven, and remember that the oven will be hotter on the side with the fire and/or coals, so you may have to rotate your pans.

Baking (at conventional oven temperatures)

Baking (500°F and lower) is used for baking bread, desserts, smaller roast meats, beans and legumes, and pasta dishes. After fully firing your oven, carefully rake out the hot coals and brush out the oven. If you wish, you can swab the deck with a damp, not wet, towel. As the temperature falls, your oven will cook gently and consistently using the heat retained in the oven dome and floor. With this type of cooking, you can bake either one fully loaded batch of bread, or multiple batches of different types of bread, but with smaller quantities.



Grilling

Your brick oven makes a great grill. By raking a layer of hot coals across the cooking floor at the front of your oven, and sliding in a free standing cast iron grill into the oven, you can enjoy wonderful grilling – with top and bottom heat. Meats and vegetables have very good grill marks that seal in moisture, giving you food that is crisp and not dried out. With heat from the grill itself, from the coals below it, and the heat radiating from oven dome above, your brick oven can cook faster than a traditional grill, leaving your food more moist and tender.



Browning

Your Forno Bravo oven reflects heat down from a live fire to brown and sear foods. You can sear meats, before adding them to casseroles to cook, and you can brown vegetables as evenly and quickly as you can with the broiler in your conventional oven. If your recipe calls for browning multiple batches of vegetables, such as Eggplant Parmesan or Ratatouille, you can spread out and use your entire cooking floor to quickly do the job.



Sautéing

If your recipe calls for *sautéing* something (anything), such as onions and garlic, celery and carrots, or ground beef, you can use a metal pan to do the job in your Forno Bravo oven. Preheat the pans for a minute or two, and then add your olive oil, and return the pan for a few seconds. Add your chopped vegetables, or anything else you need to *sauté*, and return the pan for a few minutes. You can either slightly *sauté* vegetables until they are soft and translucent, or leave them in a while longer to brown the

vegetables and build up the browned bits that you can reduced into a sauce with a splash of wine. You can leave your pan in even longer to caramelize your onions.

Combination Cooking

Many brick oven dishes, such as *Coq au Vin*, Chicken *Fricassee* and baked vegetable dishes can be cooked in a single pan, without having to use your conventional oven cook top. Add you ingredients in layers, *sautéing* and browning them as needed. Add your liquid ingredients at the end, and cover your pan to bake. This not only keeps you out of the kitchen and reduces the number of pans you have to clean, it also holds all of the flavors of your ingredients in your pan and in your food – where you want them.

Take a look at our Roast Rabbit recipe, and you can see that this entire recipe can be done in your brick oven.

A Clay Pot in a Brick Oven

Use a covered clay pot, such as a Romertopf or Forno Bravo terracotta pot, in your Forno Bravo oven to roast a moist and tender chicken. Fully fire your oven, let the temperature fall to about 650°F, and then add your covered dish. Your roast stays moist for a long time, you have more room for error between a chicken that is not quite done, or is already dried out.



Warming and Melting

You can place any type of dish, cup or pan at the mouth of your oven to warm a sauce, stock (*Caldo*), melt butter, and

make flavored olive oils. Try putting 1 Tbs of fresh rosemary into a quarter cup of olive oil and leave at the entry to your oven to warm through. You can use the flavored oil for dipping, or for vegetable dishes.

Finally, try experimenting with different pots and pans. A grill pan pre-heated in your oven gives your food nice sear marks, and terracotta pans and steel pans give roast potatoes a different texture and flavor.

Making Wood Coals for External Grilling

Watching a chef in a restaurant in Sorrento a number of years ago, I was surprised to see his assistant remove a large pile of hot coals from the pizza oven using a steel shovel, and put them into an open grill, and start cooking a mixed grill of steak, chicken, pork loin, and sausages. After thinking about it for a minute, it made perfect sense. A pizza oven is a great source of true wood coals for grilling.

If you are doing a lot of other things in your oven, such as pizzas and vegetables, there might just not be time or space for grilling. If this is the case, or if you need more grilling real estate, use your brick oven to create wood coals for you. Nothing tastes better than food cooked over real wood, and your brick oven is an efficient source of coals.



That is why many Italian outdoor kitchens include an attached open grill, which can be used either with its own

fire, or with coals from the brick oven.

4. Firing Your Oven

Build your fire in the center (left to right and front to back) of the oven using 7-9 sticks of dry kindling, one to two odor-free, non-toxic fire starters, and two to three pieces of seasoned medium or hardwood. Alternatively, you can light your fire with a butane torch. It can be easier and faster than the traditional match or lighter. Try to avoid wax and sawdust fireplace starters, and they could leave a taste in your food.



Once the fire gets going, add 2-3 pieces of wood so that the flame reaches the center and front of the dome, without lapping too far out of the oven opening. Use seasoned wood that is roughly 3"-4" in diameter, and roughly 18" long. Your firewood should not smolder or smoke before catching fire, and should burn easily and quickly. Once the fire is well established, continue adding more wood, and wait for about 20 minutes.

After about 20 minutes, a small spot at the top center of the oven dome should start to turn clear (or white), and then begin expanding outward. This "whitening" is the sign that dome is reaching the desired cooking temperature. This change occurs when the carbon accumulated on the oven dome reaches about 700°F, and turns from black to clear.

The photos on this and the next page show the top of the dome starting to turn clear, then the sides, and finally a completely clear dome, ready for cooking.



Once the whitening has started, begin building the fire toward the walls of the oven by adding pieces of wood on either side of the fire, and in the back. This wider fire will help drive the necessary heat across the entire cooking floor, and evenly spread heat across the cooking dome. Within a few minutes, you will see the whitening spreading across the dome to the sides.



After roughly 45 minutes, the entire cooking dome will turn clear, and the cooking surface will have reached the desired 700°F for cooking pizza, and you will have saturated your oven with the heat it will need for baking and roasting. You are ready to start baking pizzas, or you can let the oven temperature fall in order to start roasting or baking higher heat appetizers. Alternatively, you can rake out your coals, let your oven temperature moderate, and begin retained heat baking. For more details on different cooking styles, see Chapter 3. Types of Wood-Fired Cooking.



If you will be baking with a fire, or hot coals, you should push the fire to the side of the oven, not to the back. There are two good reasons for this. First, you can see the side of the pizza (or whatever you are cooking) and be ready to turn it when brown. It's harder to do that when the fire is in the back. Second, your oven will cook better. Wood-fired ovens work by breathing in cold air through the lower part of the oven opening, heating it and circulating it around the oven dome, and then exhausting it out the top of the opening. By putting the fire in the back, you are giving the cold air a longer path before it hits the heat source, which is both cooler, and less likely to create a nice circular convection pattern.

Choosing, Curing and Burning Wood

The type of wood you burn will depend to a large extent on where you live. The species selection and predominance of medium-hard (such as poplar) or hardwoods (such as oak) vary from the North American west coast to the east coast, and from the south to the north. Avoid burning sappy, oily woods, such as red pine, and never burn laminated woods like plywood, pressure treated woods, or anything that has been painted, chemically treated or glued.

You can also burn construction off cuts from 2x4s or even broken up pallets for kindling, but the most important rule to follow is that everything you do burn must be dry and seasoned.

The best woods to burn in your Forno Bravo oven are hardwoods such as oak, maple, ash, beech and birch, or

fruit and nut trees, including apple, almond, cherry, pear and pecan. Fruit woods not only burn well, they are also fragrant. Some of the best-known wood-fired pizzerias swear by apple. Hardwoods weigh almost three times as much as softwoods, like pines, fir, cedar and spruces, so they give off more heat (BTUs).

Some softwoods (white, yellow pine, white cedar) are acceptable when split and allowed to season to reduce sap content. Extremely oily woods (red pine) are not recommended; they will impart unpleasant flavors to the food, create far too much smoke, and deposit soot in your chimney and can darken your oven enclosure. Plus, they add little heat to your oven when it comes time to cook.



Your wood should be dry and aged for six months to a year so that it will burn well, and produce the heat that your oven needs. If your wood is green, it will burn poorly, and produce a lot of smoke – which can soot up your entry arch. Damp wood will also not bring your oven up to heat the way you want. If you are not certain whether wood you have purchased has been properly seasoned, look for tiny radial cracks cross the sections. Alternatively, you can purchase a wood moisture gauge.

If you cut your own wood, try to do it in the off-season, when the sap is in the roots. It should be given about six months to a year to dry properly. You will know it's ready when the cut ends have darkened and a series of "checks" or cracks have appeared across the ends. Remember, split wood will always dry faster than larger pieces left in

the round. As a general rule of thumb, the wood you burn should be no larger than about 3" in diameter. Split wood catches faster and burns brighter than wood in the round.

If you are stuck with a load of damp wood, or your wood has been rained on, there is one trick to help dry it out. Each time you are finished cooking with your oven, place the next day's wood inside the oven. Doing this will bake out the moisture using the previous fire's retained heat. Even if you are doing low heat cooking overnight, you can still dry your next load of wood the next day. It really works. Be sure to leave the oven door open slightly to let any gasses escape from the oven chamber.



You can store some wood below your oven floor, but the size is somewhat restricted, and it might be best reserved for kindling and your wood supply for the next few firings. Depending on how much you use your oven, you might consider building a simple woodshed with a weatherproof roof. The floor should have enough gaps in it to allow for the air movement that will assist curing.

Disposing of Hot Coals

WARNING. Take care when disposing of your hot coals, and be sure to use a suitable metal receptacle. Your coals will remain hot much longer than you think, and will be capable of starting a fire for a long period of time after you have taken them out of the oven.

5. How Heat Works in Your Oven

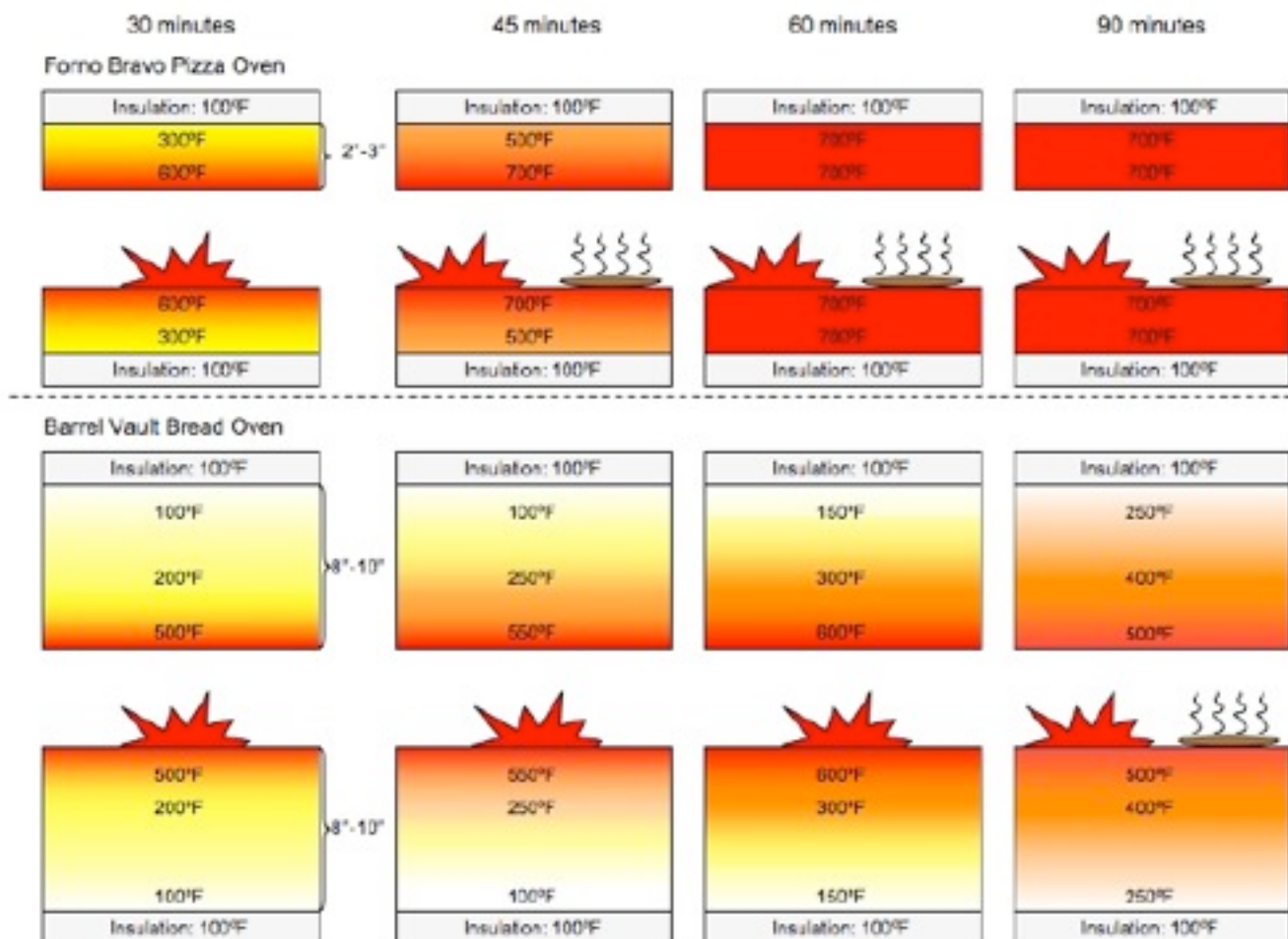
Thermal mass and insulation are the two primary components of a brick oven, and are the source of its ability to absorb and hold heat for cooking. An oven's thermal mass describes the part of the oven that is heated and provides heat to the oven chamber, while insulation describes the oven's ability to stop heat from escaping, or leaking, from the oven—where it is lost.

Heat, like most things in nature, likes equilibrium. If the inside of your pizza oven is hot and the outside edge is still cool, nature will balance the two by moving heat from

the hot spot to the cool spot – eventually making everything equally warm. Because of this, it is a good idea to saturate your oven with as much heat as possible before you start to cook.

The graphic below shows how heat is retained in a pizza oven, and how by filling the entire mass of the oven dome and floor with heat, a well-insulated pizza oven can cook pizza virtually indefinitely.

A barrel vault oven, by contrast, is designed to hold enough heat to bake multiple batches of bread from a single firing, and must be managed in a different manner.



6. Temperature Management

You can test your oven's heat in a number of places, including the dome face, the top of the hearth, the air circulating in the oven, and the refractory material behind the dome and cooking floor face. Each holds a number of clues for understanding how your oven is performing, and what you should do to manage it.

Managing dome heat for fire-in-the-oven cooking is basically simple. When the dome of the oven has completely whitened and stays clear, it is maintaining the high temperatures you want. When the color begins to turn black, you need to increase the fire.

There are at least four ways of testing the heat of your cooking surface:

- You can purchase a laser-guided infrared temperature gauge, which can accurately read high temperatures.
- You can learn to measure your cooking surface temperature using the flour test.
- You can learn to test temperature by putting your hand inside the oven and counting.
- Or, you can learn the characteristics of your oven by trial and error.



If you don't enjoy high-tech gadgets, or simply want to learn how to "feel" how your oven is working, you can start by using flour to test the cooking surface temperature. Simply throw a pinch of flour into the oven, and count how long it takes to burn and smoke. A hot, 750°F hearth will scorch flour in a few seconds.

I learned the "Mississippi" approach from my father when cooking on a Weber charcoal BBQ. Count the number of seconds, using One Mississippi, Two Mississippi, etc., that it takes for your hand to become uncomfortably hot inside the oven. One Mississippi is a very hot oven; Two Mississippi is also hot. Bread bakes well in a Four Mississippi oven. I still use this method more than any other.

After some time, you will be able to feel the heat of your own oven, and will just know when it is ready.

Finally, don't be afraid to experiment, and don't be afraid to really fire up your oven to see how it performs at high heat. If your oven is not hot enough, or does not have enough retained heat, it will not cook well.

If you are making pizzas, it might be a good idea to make some extra dough, and plan on cooking a few flat bread appetizers before the serious pizza baking begins—just to get the feel for how your oven is cooking.

7. Peels, Oven Tools and Bakeware

Each Forno Bravo oven comes with three basic pizza oven tools.

- A rectangular metal pizza peel, for placing pizzas, breads and pans inside your oven.



- A small round metal peel with a hand glide, for turning pizzas and taking food and pans out of the oven.



- A copper oven brush, for cleaning the oven cooking floor.



There are several optional oven tools available from the Forno Bravo Store.

- A rake with a specially shaped head to allow you to move wood and hot coals and reach the edge where the oven dome meets the cooking floor.



- A shovel for removing hot coals and ashes and moving and placing wood.



- Short handled wooden pizza peels for assembling pizzas before sliding them onto a metal peel to set in the oven.
- A long handled wooden pizza peel for assembling and placing pizzas in the oven.
- A log holder to keep your wood in place, and improve the airflow and the flame and heat in your oven.



- An infrared thermometer for reading the temperature of the oven in different places.



We also supply several different types grills and pans that work well in a wood-fired oven, including:

- Tuscan Grill. A freestanding cast iron grill that is high enough to allow you to spread coals under it. Use for grilling steak, chicken, fish, vegetables and anything else you like – inside your Forno Bravo oven.



- Glazed, Italian-made terracotta pans in a range of sizes and shapes for roasting meat and fish, veggies, potatoes and slow cooking casseroles. Use them covered for beans, soups, stews, and lentils, use open pans for dishes that should be browned, and use ovals for baking fish.



- Stainless steel 3-ply pots and pans. You can use All-Clad (or similar) stainless steel pans for rice dishes, fire-in-the-oven appetizers, shrimp and anything that cooks with high heat from the oven, both above and below. These pans do a good job of transferring heat

from the oven to food. You can preheat these pans for faster cooking, such as our Fast Roast Potato recipe.

- Cast iron grill pan (with raised grills on one side and smooth on the other). Use this pan to cook sausages, steaks, whole fish, and for grilling sliced eggplant, peppers and other vegetables that look good with sear marks. Make sure your pan has steel (not wood) handles. You can preheat a cast iron grill pan before putting on the food, which works well with fast-cooking appetizers, and lets you cook a whole fish without having to turn it.



- Enameled cast iron pots and pans. These are also very good at holding heat and baking casseroles. They look great, so you can put them right on the table. Be careful with Le Creuset. The modern plastic material they use for the lid handle is not heat resistant past 500°F. They are very expensive pans, and it would be a shame to ruin one. Ikea and other stores have enameled cast iron pans in a range of sizes with metal lids and handles.



- Cast iron pots and pans. They are great at holding heat and baking casseroles, both in hot and cooler ovens. They are also very durable and many come with a lid, making cast iron a good choice for slower cooking dishes, including beans, soups and stews.



- Vertical chicken stand. A metal stand that holds a chicken upright with a beer can inside its cavity. The chicken grills perfectly on the outside, while the liquid in the can steams it from the inside. Available from the Forno Bravo Store.



- Vertical rib rack. Holds ribs upright for even cooking on both sides while maximizing oven floor space. Available from the Forno Bravo Store.



- Steel one-ply paella pan with handles on the sides. Use the traditional Spanish paella pan for any rice dish, particularly for Paella Valenciana (don't move the rice after it sets!).



- Aluminum one-ply pan with handles on the sides. Uses these pans the same way you would use a stainless steel 3-ply pan. The bottom of an aluminum pan gets hot very fast. I use this one to brown eggplant for eggplant Parmesan.
- Regular round or rectangular steel baking pans. Use these traditional baking sheet pans for Focaccia and Schiacciata. They conduct heat better than terracotta pans for baking bread and baker a better flat bread.



Bakeware to Avoid

White porcelain pans tend to crack in a wood-fired oven.

Be careful with terracotta-looking pans mass-produced in Asia. They might not withstand the temperature of your wood-fired oven. You probably would not worry about the cost of the pan, but if it cracks, it probably will ruin your meal.

Be careful with any ceramic pan that you would be sad to lose. Better safe than sorry. The combination of high heat, flame and being moved around with a pizza peel can be rough on any pan.

8. Using Peels

Should you use a wooden pizza peel to build your pizza and set it in your oven, or should you make it on a flat surface and use a metal peel to place it in your oven? There are three schools of thought, so try them all and decide what works for you.

The mainstream method used by restaurants and professional pizzaioli is to build the pizza on a solid, cool counter (such as marble or granite) then slide a metal peel under it to set it in the oven. Or, more accurately, pull the pizza onto the peel. Aluminum is the metal of choice for the placing peel you use to set your pizzas. It's slippery, and your bread and pizza will slide right off. If your oven is large enough for multiple pizzas, and you want to put pizzas in the back or sides, you will want a peel with long handle. Extruded (hollow, rectangular) aluminum is a good handle choice, because it's lighter than steel or wood, it's easier to keep the peel level, and lasts longer.

An option used by many homeowners is to assemble their pizzas on short wooden peels, then slide them onto the metal placing peel to set them in the oven. This technique is little slower and less efficient for a professional, but minimizes the chance that you, or your guests, will ruin a pizza when it sticks to the counter or gets damaged when moving it to the placing peel. We keep a number of short wooden peels around the house for parties, so guests can use them to make their own pizzas. This also works well for kids.

The final option is use a long handled wooden peel to both assemble your pizza and slide it into your oven. This technique pretty much eliminates the risk of something going wrong, but long wood peels can be difficult to move around the kitchen, and it can get crowded with lots of guests and lots of long wooden peels all converging on the oven. Still, if you are only going to make a few pizzas, it can be a convenient, low stress method.

Make sure your placing peel is large enough to hold your pizza (and the ones your guests make), as an uncooked pizza will sag over the edge of a smaller peel, and make a mess. The placing peel should be rectangular, because

you will use the flat front edge to slide under the assembled pizzas. It can be challenging for the home pizzaiolo to slide a round, or small, peel under a pizza that your friend (or child) has lovingly made—we've been there.

I like to use flour, rather than cornmeal, to make the pizza slide off easily. This is the Italian tradition. Besides, I don't like the taste or texture of cornmeal. Rice flour is also good at keeping pizzas from sticking to the peel.

Regardless of how you placed your pizza in the oven, you will need a round metal (not rectangular) peel to turn it and pull it out—it is very difficult to do this with a wooden peel or rectangular metal peel. This peel can be as small as 8" in diameter, which makes it easy to rotate the pizza to cook evenly facing the fire. This small, round size also works well for removing your pizza, because once cooked, it comes out flat and won't sag over the edges. The Forno Bravo round peel has a slide that moves up and down the handle, making it easy to control inside the oven.

Don't forget to download the *Forno Bravo Wood-Fired Bread* and *Forno Bravo Wood-Fired Pizza* e-Books for more information, techniques and recipes. They are available for free download from the Forno Bravo Store.

9. Appetizers and Tapas

Introduction

You can cook wonderful appetizers using the fire-in-the-oven technique and a stainless steel, cast iron or aluminum pan. The reflecting heat from above, combined with heat conducting through the bottom of the steel pan, will cook appetizers in a couple of minutes. Try the Pan Seared Prawn recipes – it taste great and only takes a few seconds.

You can serve appetizers before a pizza party, or before a roasted or grilled meal, or you can make an entire meal from them – as the Spanish do.

Tapas are the little Spanish dishes that you can enjoy as an appetizer with a drink or have a few to make a meal. It's a tradition in Spain that started with a "tapa" (topping) on top of your drink, *vino o cerveza* (wine or beer). They came with a few almonds, a few olives, a few apricots – whatever they had available, and they were free with the drink.

Today, *Tapas* are very popular in Spain, and all around the world, where you can find entire restaurants dedicated to *Tapas* and the great combinations of flavors that you can pack into a small dish.

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- Toasted Almonds
- Tomato, Basil, and Goat Cheese Tapas
- Albondigas (Spanish Meatballs)
- Cold Grilled Eggplant
- Gambas Pil-Pil (Sizzling Prawns)
- Brick Oven Empanadas
- Stuffed Mushrooms
- Pan Seared Prawns

Grilled Shrimp on Rosemary Skewers

Ingredients

- About half lb of raw Prawns, peeled
- 1 /4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup white wine
- 4 garlic cloves very thinly sliced
- Sea salt
- Lemon wedges
- Bread to serve

Preparation

Fire your oven until hot. This dish can be cooked in a range of oven temperatures, from very hot (700°F pizza heat) to moderately hot (450°F). If your oven is less hot, you can use more coals.

Marinate whole shrimp with the shell on in olive oil, white wine, garlic, and lemon. For a change of pace, pick six fresh rosemary branches, strip off the leaves and use them for the skewers!

Place the shrimp on a preheated Tuscan Grill, set over hot coals. The shrimp can be cooked while the main meal is finishing up. With the heat from the dome and the heat from the coals under the grill, you might not have to even turn the shrimp.



Marinated shrimp ready to grill



Ready to go.

Toasted Almonds

This is nice, simple appetizer, and a great way to use the retained heat in your oven when you are finished cooking for the day. The trick is to not over toast them, or they will burn.

Ingredients

- 2 cups uncooked almonds
- 3 Tbs olive oil

Preparation

Almonds can be toasted in a range of oven temperatures, so you will have to control cooking time accordingly.

Use a small, preheated terracotta dish. Put in a little olive, and then add the raw almonds – with skin on. Toss them a few times to coat with oil and toast to your liking. There is a very narrow time between toasted and burnt (throw them out and start over). Better underdone than burnt, but try to get them toasted.

Serve as an appetizer. *Delizioso!*



Raw almonds.



Toasting.

Tomato, Basil, and Goat Cheese *Tapas*

You can prepare the tomato base ahead of time, add it to a dish with a slice of goat cheese in the middle and grill it in your wood oven until the cheese is melted/toasted.

Serve on toast points.

Sauce

- 6 +/- peeled tomatoes (Roma work nicely), diced
- 1/2 onion, chopped fine
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped fine
- 2 tsp herbs de Provence
- 1/4 cup fresh basil, slivered
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

Sauté the sauce to reduce the liquid and thicken it; about 10 minutes. You can make a lot of sauce ahead of time; it will keep fine in the refrigerator for another *tapa*.

Prepare toast points by slicing a baguette and toasting the slices. Butter with garlic butter (*ali oli*). These are served with the dish after roasting.

Cooking

Place a hot layer of the tomato basil mixture in a small low-sided terracotta dish (6") and place a slice of goat cheese in the middle. The sauce and the cheese should be about 1/2 inch thick.

Place in your wood oven under a nice flame until the goat cheese is golden brown and bubbly. Sprinkle with some fresh slivered basil.

Serving

Spoon onto the toast points and serve. Disappears quickly!

Albondigas (Spanish Meatballs)

Ingredients

Meatballs

- 1 medium onion, chopped fine
- 1 lb ground beef
- 1/4 pound ground pork
- 2/3 cup fine dry bread crumbs
- Salt

Sauce

- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 medium onion
- 2 Tbs olive oil
- 1 can whole tomatoes
- 3/4 tsp dried oregano, crumbled

Plus

- 1/2 cup stock or wine
- Garlic cloves, fennel, or shallots (optional)

Preparation

Fire your oven, and allow it to fall to a moderate temperature, roughly 400-500°F. This dish can be cooked with a small fire, coals, or retained heat.

Sauté the onion and add the tomatoes and spices to make the sauce, either in your oven or on a cook top.

Prepare the meatballs by mixing together the ingredients and shaping the balls. Place them in an oiled dish, and add half the sauce. Roast for 10-15 minutes, and then add the second half of the sauce. Return to the oven to heat through, and serve.

To keep them juicy, add some stock or wine about half way through roasting. If your oven is too hot, you can cover the pan with foil. Remove it near the end to brown the top of the meatballs.

Optionally, you can add a couple of halved shallots and roast them with the meatballs for a different flavor. Or try roasted garlic, onions, or fennel.



Meatballs and shallot in a terracotta pan



Baked and ready to serve.

Cold Grilled Eggplant

Ingredients

- 2 eggplants
- 1 red pepper
- 1 ball fresh mozzarella
- 3 Tbs olive oil
- 1 Tbs wine vinegar
- 1 tsp balsamic vinegar
- 2 Tbs fresh basil, slivered
- Salt

Preparation

Fire the oven until hot. This dish uses high heat to sear the eggplant.

Cut the eggplant into 1/2" slices (they have to be the same thickness to cook evenly).

Salt the eggplant and let drain for 30 minutes. Rinse well, then brush with olive oil (an actual brush works best).

Grill the eggplant on a hot grill pan in a hot oven until brown and cooked through.

Grill the whole pepper, and put it in a brown bag to sweat. When it is cool, remove the skin, core, and slice.

Place eggplant and peppers in layers on your serving dish. Coat with the mixed oil and vinegars and put in the refrigerator for 2-3 hours. Top with mozzarella, a little more olive oil, and the basil.



Gambas Pil-Pil (Sizzling Prawns)

Roast and serve this dish in individual terracotta dishes; it is authentic, and it looks great on the table.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup good quality olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves very thinly sliced
- 1 small fresh red chili seeded and chopped
- About half lb of raw prawns, peeled
- Sea salt
- 2 Tbs of chopped fresh parsley
- Lemon wedges
- Bread to serve

Preparation

Fire your oven, and make sure it is still hot with a good flame. Heat the olive oil in the individual terracotta dishes.

Add garlic and chili and cook for 1 to 2 minutes making sure that they do not burn.

Add the prawns, sprinkle with salt, and cook for a further 2 to 3 minutes at a brisk pace.

Stir in the parsley.

Serve quickly so that the prawns are still sizzling in the cooking juices.

Serve with bread and lemon wedges.

Brick Oven *Empanadas*

Dough

- 1 kg (2.2 lb) flour
- 300 g (.66 lb) melted fat (baked) or 200 g (.44 lb) melted fat/lard (fried)
- 400 g (.88 lb) not water
- 1 tsp sea salt

Filling

- 200 g (.44 lb) melted fat
- 500 g (1.1 lb) chopped white onions
- 1 kg (2.2 lb) chopped meat
- 100 g (0.22 lb) dried grapes
- 6 boiled eggs, chopped
- 200 g (.44 lb) of green olives
- Salt and black pepper, to taste



Filling Preparation

Add the melted fat and chopped onions to a pan with a lid, and *sauté* until slightly brown. Keep the onions moving. Do not let them burn.

Add the chopped meat and the salt. Cook until the meat is no longer pink.

Add pepper to taste.

Remove from the oven and let it to cool (warm or ambient temperature)

Dough Preparation

Add the salt to the hot water, and stir until it is completely dissolved. Let it cool.

Arrange the flour as a ring (like a volcano, with a hole in the middle) on your counter.

Incorporate the warm melted fat/lard by putting it in the middle of the flour and mixing with your fingers.

Once the flour and fat are mixed, slowly add the salted water, a bit at a time, kneading the dough until it is smooth and shiny.

Put the dough in a covered bowl and let rest in the refrigerator for one half to one hour.

Take the dough from the refrigerator and shape it on the counter with a rolling pin until it is approximately 2 mm (0.08 inches) thick.

Cut in circles 13 -15 cm (5 – 8 inches) in diameter.





Finishing the *Empanadas*,

Put a generously filled tablespoon of filling on each dough disk, and then add some raisins, one olive, and a teaspoon of chopped boiled egg.

Moisten the edges of the disks with water; fold each one over the filling to form a half moon. Seal the edges by gently pressing with a fork or your thumb and forefinger.



Baking

Arrange the *empanadas* on a clean metal dish or baking sheet.

Let your oven reach maximum temperature and bake the empanadas for ten minutes. At that point, take a look. If the dough is pale brown with dark spots, they're ready.

Brick Oven *Empanada* Pie

For a change, follow the same recipes and bake *empanada* pies.



Stuffed Mushrooms

Ingredients

- One lb of mushrooms -- white, brown or Portobello
- 1-2 gloves garlic, minced
- 2-3 Tbs fresh parsley, chopped
- 3 Tbs grated Parmesan
- 2 Tbs capers
- 4 Tbs good olive oil
- 1 Tbs white or red wine vinegar
- 1 Tbs Balsamic vinegar
- Salt and Pepper

Preparation

Fire your ovens, and leave the flame going. This dish cooks at high heat with a live fire.

Add 2 Tbs of the olive oil to the bottom of the baking pan.

De-stem the mushrooms, keeping the caps in one piece, and arrange the caps in the baking pan – top side down.

Chop the mushroom stems, and mix with the garlic, parsley, Parmesan and capers, then spoon the mixture into the mushroom caps. Cover with 2 Tbs olive oil, the vinegar, salt and pepper.

Bake in a pizza-hot oven for 2-3 minutes, until the tops are brown and bubbling.

Pan Seared Prawns

This recipe works well in a hot oven (700°F) using a live fire and a hot, preheated steel pan.

Ingredients

- 1 lb of uncooked shrimp (peeled or unpeeled)

Marinate

- 1-2 gloves of garlic, minced
- 2-3 Tbs fresh parsley, chopped
- 4 Tbs best olive oil

- 1 Tbs white wine vinegar
- 1 Tbs Balsamic vinegar
- Salt and Pepper

Preparation

Fire your oven, and keep the fire going. This dish cooks at high heat with a live flame.

Clean and butterfly the shrimp, then marinate for an hour in the garlic, parsley, oil and vinegar.

A few minutes before you are ready to eat, pre-heat a cast iron grill pan or steel pan in a pizza-hot oven. Get it hot.

Pull the pan out of the oven, and pour in everything. Grill for 1-3 minutes, until the tops are brown and bubbling.

10. Beef, Lamb and Pork

Introduction

Your Forno Bravo oven will really shine when it comes to traditional roasting, because it cooks with a high moist heat that does not dry out your roast. You can also simultaneously grill, *sauté* in a steel pan, and broil.

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- Pork Chops with Pears
- Brick Oven Beef Rib Roast
- Beef Stew in Red Wine
- Brick Oven Rabbit
- Grilled Steak

Roast Beef

Ingredients

- One 8lb beef roast
- 3 cloves fresh garlic
- 2 Tbs rosemary (for the marinade)
- 4-5 sprigs fresh rosemary (for the roasting pan)
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup red wine
- Fresh ground pepper to taste

Preparation

Marinate a nice piece of beef overnight in red wine, olive oil, thyme, and rosemary.

The next day, fire your oven until hot, and then let the heat fall to a low to moderate temperature, roughly 350-400°F. If you have fired your oven for a longer period (90 minutes or more), rake out the coals to allow the temperature to keep falling. If you do not have enough retained heat in the oven, you can leave a small fire, or coals at the start of cooking.

Place the roast on a bed of rosemary in a terracotta dish, and top it with some garlic cloves halves and a branch of rosemary.

The roast will brown at the higher heat, then roast slowly as the oven temperature falls. It should take somewhere from 2 to 3 hours to cook. When the roast just starts to drip its juices and it is brown on the outside, check the temperature with a meat thermometer. Pull the roast from the oven when the inside temperature of the roast is 135° to 140°F. Let the roast sit for at least 15 minutes before carving to serve.



Cochinillo (Roast Suckling Pig)

Cochinillo is baby pig. They are popular in Spain during the holiday season, can be found in any market and typically weigh about 5 kg (11 lbs) whole. This recipe calls for a fruit and garlic marinade.

The one shown here was roasted for four to five hours and was served for New Year's Eve with roasted garlic rosemary potatoes. It was turned over three or four times during roasting.

Half of the pig served six people. The remainder was put back into a slow oven for another two to three hours, so the meat fell off the bones. The bones were saved to make soup.



Marinated and ready for the oven.



Out of the oven.

Leg of Lamb or Lamb Shoulder

Ingredients

- Leg or shoulder of lamb (a per 2-4 people depending on the size)
- 3-4 garlic cloves, sliced
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup red wine
- 2 Tbs rosemary
- 2 Tbs thyme

Preparation

Pierce the lamb with a knife, and insert garlic. Marinate overnight in olive oil, wine, rosemary and thyme in the refrigerator.

Cooking

Fire your oven until hot, and then let the heat fall to a low to moderate temperature, roughly 350-400°F. If you have fired your oven for a longer period (90 minutes or more), rake out the coals to allow the temperature to keep falling. If you do not have enough retained heat in the oven, you can leave a small fire, or coals at the start of cooking.

Place the lamb in a terracotta dish and add some fresh rosemary. You can even throw some fresh rosemary in the oven. It adds some spice to the air and the food.

Roast for approximately 30 minutes per pound for medium-doneness.



Brick Oven Roast Ham

Ingredients

20 lbs (10kg) fresh ham
6 1/2 cups (1.5L) dark beer (preferably homemade ale)
3 cups (.75L) blueberry sparkling wine (also homemade)

Preparation

Marinate the ham in the beer and wine for 2-3 three days, keeping refrigerated (turn occasionally).

Set the ham on a rack set in a metal baking tray, with the fat side up.

Pour the marinade in the bottom of the baking tray.

Oven Firing

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and the carbon burns off the oven dome. Allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F, as the fire burns down. This is about a three Mississippi oven).

Push the coals to the side, and add a few pieces of smaller wood, about 2" rounds, which has a nice flavor, such as fruit or nut.

Wait until they start to catch fire.

Cooking

Set the ham in the oven and close the door, keeping the heat and smoke inside the oven.

Bake for about 4 hours, or until the internal temperature of the ham is 185°F.



Fresh ham in a roasting pan.



Four-hour bake starting at 500°F.

Whole Lamb – Roasted Different Ways

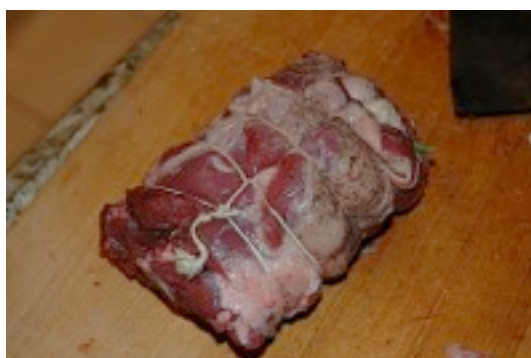
Preparation

You can prepare a whole lamb a number of different ways. We took out the innards and grilled them (so lamb kidney is not our favorite, but we tried it).

We butchered off the back legs and marinated them separately (one in a Cuban mojo and one in a Thai curry).

We also marinated the rib cage section with the rib chops in the mojo.

We took the loin chop section and tied up a roast with mint and garlic.



The neck, head and other scraps went into a stock.

We braised the front shoulders in a coconut and *galangal* (Thai ginger) broth.

We stuffed the marinated rib cage section with citrus mint and garlic.



Cooking

Fire the oven at least 4 hours before you want to start cooking. Let the dome go white, rake out the coals, let the oven equalize for about 1 hour, then leave the door off for about 2 hours until it falls to 350°F.

Cover the lamb with foil so it stays moist, then uncover close to the end of cooking for better browning

Roast the marinated rib cage and the legs at about 350°F for 2 hours.

We put the braised shoulders into a Thai soup with the lamb broth. This was very excellent. The loin roast we grilled on the gas grill and it came out very well. Both the legs were tasty. The coconut curry one was cooked a little more well done, but the rib roast and the mojo leg were perfectly pink.

Serving

Serve it all with rice and some mini Bok Choy par cooked then *sautéed* in garlic and butter, and also some caramelized fennel root.



Ribs

There are many ways to bake ribs, ranging for crispy ribs in a hotter oven to low and slow. You can bake your ribs in a roasting bag, in aluminum foil, or in a covered, cast iron pan, or a rib rack from the Forno Bravo Store.

Preparation

Here is one method. Use a basic BBQ rub, and then keep them refrigerated 2-3 days. Wrap them in foil, put them in a roasting pan with a rack to keep them off the oven floor.



Here's another. Season the ribs with barbecue salt, garlic, carrots, green pepper and some tomato slices, and place them in a roasting bag.



One more. Coat your ribs with BBQ sauce, and place them in a heavy enameled cast iron pot. Bake them using the low and slow method.

Cooking

If you like crispy and medium to medium-well done ribs, you can roast at a high temperature and short baking time. Try 475°F (250°C) for 2 hours.

If you are looking for tender, slow cook ribs, lower the temperature to 300°F (150°C), place the ribs in a roasting bag, and let the ribs bake for 4 to 6 hours – or longer.

The ribs in the photo below were seasoned with barbecue salt and garlic, placed in a roasting bag, and baked at 300°F (150°C) for 9+ hours. These were so tender, they almost melted, -- you could not even use a knife to cut them. Delicious.



Salt Encrusted Pork Loin over Leeks

Ingredients

- One 2 to 3 lb pork tenderloin
- 15 leek leaves
- 1/4 cup grated onion
- 6 cloves garlic
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Fresh ground pepper
- 4-6 rosemary stems
- 6 basil leaves
- 3 lbs coarse salt
- 1 to 1 1/4 cup water
- Rock salt to cover

Preparation

Start the oven and fire it until the soot cokes off the walls as if you would be making pizza. Let the fire burn to coals and add two or three additional 24" logs about 3" in diameter to keep the fire burning actively.

Line a shallow roasting pan with aluminum foil and lay in a bed of rock salt approximately 1/2" deep. Layer clean Leek leaves onto the salt bed. Combine the oil, onion, 2 cloves of crushed garlic and 1/4 teaspoon pepper in a large plastic bag. Toss the roast in the bag to coat it thoroughly with the oil and spice marinade.

Combine coarse salt with 1 cup of water to form a thick paste. Add more water as needed to make a workable paste. Take 1 1/2 cups of this paste and form into a rectangle larger than the pork roast on the leek leaves. Layer 3 stems of rosemary and 2 cloves of garlic slivered onto the salt paste. Remove the roast from the marinade bag and place it on the salt bed. Layer remaining rosemary, basil, and slivered garlic cloves onto the pork roast. Take the remaining salt paste and spread it on the meat to seal it well. Fill the pan with rock salt to surround and cover the meat. Cover with aluminum foil.

Cooking

Spread the fire into a U shape in the oven and slide the pan into the opening in the fire. Add wood as necessary to

keep an active fire burning. Cook for 15 minutes per pound turning the pan 180 degrees halfway through the cooking time. When the cooking time is reached, check with a meat thermometer before removing from the oven and allow to stand for 10 minutes.

Remove from the pan and discard the salt crust. Makes 8 servings.

With an active fire in the oven, it will maintain a temperature about 700°F, which will cause the salt paste to quickly create a crust that will seal in the meat's juices.

Pork Chops with Pears

The chops must have been two and a half inches thick and marbled with just the right amount of fat. When chopping the mushrooms keep in mind that they will reduce in size by half. You want to err on the side of chopping them too large otherwise they will be too small to have any texture by the time they are finished cooking.

It is not necessary to use the jam and relish, and you can experiment with any sweet fruit jam or tomato based relish.

Ingredients

- 3 of the thickest pork chops you can find
- 3 green onions chopped (just the white portion)
- 2 pears peeled and quartered (we used red Anjou but some say that Bosc is best for cooking)
- 6 medium size (about half the size of a dollar bill) roughly chopped Portobello mushrooms
- Olive oil
- Red wine
- 1 jar of Roma Tomato and Chili M lange jam
- 1 jar of Cranberry-Shallot Relish

Preparation

Put a couple Tbs of the oil in a *saut * pan and sweat the onions over high heat for about three minutes.

Add more oil to the pan if needed and add the chopped mushrooms and continue cooking until the mushrooms begin to reduce.

Add about half the jar of the Roma Tomato and Chili M lange Jam, and continue cooking until mushrooms reduce in size by one half. You want to end up with a nice thick glazed mushroom mixture but don't overcook the mushrooms; they'll cook some more while in the chop. Salt and pepper to taste.

Cut a pocket into each of the pork chops. Try to keep the entry hole no larger than two inches and swivel the knife about to make the interior hole larger than the entry hole. Stuff the chops with the mushroom mixture. Just pack it in there as best you can.

Place the chops in a earthenware dish coated with olive oil and add enough red wine to cover the bottom of the dish with about one eighth of an inch of wine. Salt and pepper to taste.

Cooking

Cover tightly with foil and place in a hot (625 F - 725  F) brick oven.

While the chops are cooking, place the pear quarters in a pan and coat with about one third of the jar of Cranberry-Shallot Relish.

After the chops have been in the oven for 1 hour, remove the foil and add the pear/relish mixture. Place the chops back in the oven, this time without the foil. After about half an hour they should look like the picture below. Serve with the pears and the liquid from the dish poured over the chops.



Brick Oven Beef Rib Roast

Ingredients

- One 8lb beef rib roast (1 rib per 2 people, except for major carnivores)
- 1/2 cup Dijon mustard
- 3 cloves fresh garlic
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 3 Tbs olive oil (or to coat sauté pan)
- 2 Tbs butter
- Splash of red wine
- Fresh ground pepper to taste

Preparation

Splash olive oil to cover the bottom of a heavy *sauté* pan on

medium-high heat, add 2 Tbs of butter to melt. Brown the roast on all sides. It won't get any more browning in the oven so this is where you're getting the crispy brown outside you want.

Take a half cup of Dijon mustard, add 2-3 cloves of crushed garlic, a couple of sprigs of fresh rosemary (crushed), fresh ground pepper and a splash of red wine in a small bowl. Stir to mix completely. Pat mixture all over the roast with a spoon.

Cooking

You should fire your oven until the soot on the dome cokes off and let it drop in temperature until the hearth bricks are running about 250-275°F before starting to prepare the roast. This is a good time to make a pizza lunch followed by a few loaves of bread.

You'll be cooking the roast for several hours (30 minutes per pound) at relatively low heat (200-250°F), which means you need to brown the roast before you put it in the oven (this will kill any surface bacteria which is important when roasting at temps where the surface won't reach 180F within a couple of hours).

Place the roast on a rack in a shallow roasting pan and place it into your oven. Close the door tightly. (Think about using a remote cooking thermometer and receiver, or a digital thermometer that sits outside the oven.)

Medium (140°F) will take approximately 30 minutes per pound for an 8lb roast. Rare is 125-130F, while medium-rare is 130-135F. When cooked like this you won't get a temperature "bump" when you take it out of your Forno Bravo oven (when the internal temp rises another 10-15°F) as you do with a regular high-heat roasting in your home oven, so take it out as soon as the internal temp is what you want. If you're not quite ready for dinner, you can put it in a 140°F oven for up to an hour without it cooking any further.

Serving

Let the roast stand for about 15 - 20 minutes to cool slightly and for the juices to pull back into the interior. Now you're ready to slice and serve the best prime rib you have ever eaten.



Beef Stew in Red Wine

This is a very simple, no nonsense, quick to prepare dish you can make easily in your wood-fired oven. It's a big, satisfying meal that's especially welcome in fall and winter. It's very flexible, too, so experiment with different ingredients, especially vegetables. All you need with it is a green salad, good bread for dipping, and red wine, of course. You can double it for a crowd. Freezes well, but remove the potatoes first. One of the good things about this recipe is that you end up with exactly one pan and one pot to wash.

Ingredients

- 3 lbs bottom round roast, cut into bite-sized chunks
- 1 lb sausages cut in rounds (Italian, Chorizo, your choice)
- 1 large sweet, Vidalia or red onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, coarsely chopped
- 2 large carrots, coarsely chopped
- 1 1/2 lbs firm-fleshed potatoes cut in quarters, skin on
- 1 red pepper cut in strips
- 2-3 large unpeeled garlic cloves, smashed
- 2 cups fresh tomatoes, unpeeled, cored, seeded, and chopped
- 1 tsp oregano or thyme
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 8-10 strips lean bacon (optional)

Preparation

If you decide to use the bacon, render it in a large frying pan on the stove or in your oven, until it's very crunchy. Reserve the fat to brown the meat and vegetables. Crumble the bacon once it's drained and cooled.

Put about a cup of flour into a plastic bag. Spice the flour to your liking with sea salt, fresh pepper, paprika, oregano, etc. Toss the beef chunks in the bag about ten pieces at a time, shake off excess flour, and then brown well in a pan using either the bacon fat or olive oil. (Flouring the beef thickens the finished sauce during cooking, so you don't have to.) Don't crowd the pan to make sure the beef browns, not steams.

Place the browned meat in a large, enameled cast iron pot with a tight fitting lid. Brown the sausage rounds in the same frying pan; add to pot. Then brown the onions, celery, carrots and pepper in the same pan, adding olive oil if necessary. Add to the pot. Brown the potatoes. Add them, too.

Stir in the tomatoes, spices, and bacon. Bury the garlic among the ingredients.

If there's more than a tablespoon of fat in the frying pan, discard it. Deglaze the pan with about a cup of beef stock or wine, scraping up the brown bits as the liquid comes to the boil. Pour into pot.

Pour enough beef stock and red wine (half and half works well) into the pot to almost cover the meat. Sprinkle the salt over the liquid.

Cook, covered, in a low and slow oven with no fire for about two hours. Timing will depend on the heat of the hearth. Take it out after 2 hours and uncover to see if the sauce is thickened to your liking and the beef is very tender. If you want a thicker sauce, return it to the oven, uncovered, for about 15 minutes.

Brick Oven Rabbit

If I had to choose, this would probably be my favorite meal out of the Pompeii oven. It's a fair amount of work (especially peeling the pearl onions) but it's really worth it.

Ingredients

- 1 rabbit cut up
- 1/2 cup red wine
- 4 Tbs red wine vinegar
- Olive oil
- Flour, salt and pepper
- 3 celery stalks, sliced
- 3 carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 - 8 garlic cloves, (can you ever have too much?)
- 2 Tbs of tomato paste dissolved in 1 1/4 cups of water.
- 2 rosemary sprigs
- 4 allspice cloves
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 bag of pearl onions
- 2 Tbs brown sugar

Preparation

Marinate rabbit pieces 4 hours in about one cup of red wine mixed with 4 Tbs of red wine vinegar and two crushed bay leaves. (Or if you don't have the time, marinate it for about 4 minutes; really, I've never noticed any difference except in the color of the meat).

Place 1/2 cup of flour in a grocery bag, and then add salt and pepper. Remove the rabbit from the marinade (AND SAVE THE MARINADE) and dry the pieces of rabbit with paper towels. Place the rabbit in grocery bag and shake like crazy to coat the rabbit with the flour.

Wet the bottom of a big frying pan with olive oil (about 3-4 Tbs) and fry the rabbit over as high a heat as you can without burning the oil (turn on that vent fan). The point here is NOT really to cook the meat, but instead to get a nice crisp crust on the exterior of the pieces.



Remove the rabbit from the pan and place in your ovenproof dish.



Add the celery and carrots to the pan the rabbit just hopped out of, and fry them for about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and fry just until you can smell it (1-2 minutes?). Add some salt and pepper.



Pour the carrots, celery and garlic onto the rabbit. Add the reserved marinade to the dish as well. Put it in a hot oven

uncovered for about 5-10 minutes, don't let the marinade completely evaporate; the point here is just to reduce it a bit. Leave the frying pan alone; you'll use it again.



When these pictures were taken the oven was very HOT.



After the marinade reduces, remove the dish from the oven, add the tomato paste dissolved in water, the allspice, the cinnamon and the rosemary; cover tightly with tin foil and return to oven for about 1 hour to 90 minutes (your time will vary; err on the side of too long but don't let the liquid completely dry out. You cannot ruin this dish by cooking it too long but you can ruin it by allowing the liquid to completely dry out).

Pour yourself a glass of chardonnay; grab a paring knife and your bag of pearl onions and go outside and peel the onions. I've found that peeling pearl onions is best done outside where you can get tiny pieces of onion skin all over the place and not be concerned. Take a broom and sweep the onion skins off the patio and into the dirt.

Add some more olive oil to the pan and fry the daylight out of your pearl onions. You want them brown. After they are brown add the brown sugar and cook a little more to glaze them.



About 10 minutes before you eat, remove the foil from the dish and add the onions (but not the excess oil) to the top. Do not stir if you like your rabbit skin crispy. Continue cooking for the remaining time. It's done when it looks like this the photograph below. The camera made the onions look darker than they really were, although they were pretty dark but still yummy.



Grilled Steak

Ingredients

- Two great steaks
- 1 bottle Russian River Pinot Noir

Preparation

Fire your oven until the dome goes white and you have developed a good bed of coals. Rake the coals forward toward the mouth of the oven. Preheat your cast iron Tuscan Grill in the oven with the coals underneath, and then throw on the steaks. Try grilling the steaks with just salt. They will cook very quickly to mid-rare (about 7 minutes total).

Steaks grilled in your Forno Bravo oven will be very tasty, with a nice sweet smoke flavor. They will taste great paired with a California Pinot Noir.



11. Poultry

Introduction

If you are like us, you are always wrestling with how to cook chicken. It is always either still a little under-done, and pink, or overcooked and dry. Sometimes it seems as though it is impossible to bake the perfect chicken.

The good news is that wood-fired chicken is much more forgiving, and it is easy to bake or roast chicken that is both nicely done (which is very important to many people who enjoy chicken), yet still moist and tender. Because your brick oven cooks at a higher temperature, in a moist environment, you have a much wider window of time where your chicken is just right.

If your oven is too hot when you want to start roasting chicken, you can cover it with foil and start anyway. Your chicken will still not dry out.

Also, remember to put foil on your chicken or turkey wingtips to keep them from burning.

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***Pollo ala Griglia* (Grilled Chicken)**

Ingredients

- 2 whole chickens

Marinate

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Juice and grated rind of one lemon
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled, smashed and chopped
- 1 tsp finely chopped red chilies
- Salt and pepper
- Parsley (as a garnish)
- Fresh lemon wedges

Preparation

Mix the marinade in a shallow glass bowl. Whisk well.

Rinse the chicken, then cut it down the middle of the breast and flatten out evenly. Place it in the marinade, turning to cover.

Cover the bowl and leave it in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours, or overnight if you can.

Fire your oven and let the heat fall slightly, to roughly 550-600°F. Rake the coals from a hot oven in front of the oven opening, and position a Tuscan Grill over the coals and let it heat for a few minutes. Then set the whole chicken on the grill.

Depending on the heat of your oven and coals, you can cook the chicken without turning. If either the top or bottom is significantly hotter, turn the chicken once. Grill for 15-20 minutes total. Garnish with parsley and fresh lemon



Vertical Chicken

Vertical chicken, or beer can chicken, is perfect in a brick oven. The oven's moist heat cooks the chicken all around, while the stand provides more flavor and more steam.

The chicken stand holds a can of beer (or wine, or anything you want to use for flavor) and the chicken. You set the stand directly on the cooking floor, so that juices that hit the floor so that juices that hit the floor give the chicken great aroma and flavor. You can also place the stand in a roasting pan if you want to keep your floor clean for other cooking at the same time. Either way, the heat of the next firing will clean the oven floor.

Ingredients

- One 3-4 lb whole chicken
- 1 can of beer, half empty
- Salt, pepper, garlic and the herbs of choice to taste (or a premixed dry rub)
- Olive oil
- Lemon wedge

Preparation

Add herbs and garlic to the beer can, along with half the beer, and set it in the stand.

Set the chicken on the stand and rub with olive oil, salt, pepper and herbs. Or, try a dry rub.

Cooking

Fire your oven and let the temperature fall, keeping a bed of coals on one side. Roast the chicken in a moderately warm oven (400°F-500°F, or 4 Mississippis) for about 1 hour. If your oven is too hot, cover the top half of the chicken with aluminum foil.

Remove and let rest for 10 minutes to allow the bird to finish cooking.

Serve it quartered.



Roast Chicken

You have a lot of flexibility when doing a simple roast chicken. If your oven is hotter than 550°F, you can wrap the chicken in foil to keep it from burning, and remove the foil a few minutes before the chicken is done for browning. If your oven is less than 400°F, you can leave it in the oven longer, 90 minutes or more. If your oven is warm, but too cool to roast a chicken, you can light a small fire. The heat from the fire will not only help bake your chicken, it will give you a smoky flavor.

Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken
- 2 Tbs olive oil
- Salt and paper
- Lemons
- Fresh herbs
- Aromatic vegetables

Preparation

Fire your oven until hot, and then let the heat fall to a low to moderate temperature, roughly 450-500°F. Roast your chicken until done, according to the times listed above.

Rub inside and outside with olive oil.

Salt and pepper inside the cavity.

Place a whole pierced lemon, thyme and rosemary branches into the chicken's cavity. One trick is to roll your lemons on the counter before piercing with knife to get better release of fluids.

Options

Place a layer of aromatics in the bottom of the pans (onions, carrots and celery), to start a nice sauce or gravy.

Use a steel pan when roasting, and add diced onions under the chicken. When the chicken is cooked, put the pan and the browned onions on a cool top and de-glaze the pan with Madeira wine, then add 2-3 Tbs butter to make a nice sauce.



Rotolo di Tacchino (Stuffed Turkey Roll)

Here is a stuffed turkey roll recipe that works great in a brick oven. The heat of the oven sears the outside of the roast, and browns the pan drippings to make a wonderful, light sauce. We stuffed our turkey with a ham and cheese frittata, which is a nice change from a traditional bread stuffing.

To make a turkey roll you'll want about two pounds of breast meat, ideally from a turkey large enough that this will be half a breast. You can use any type of *frittata*, including ham and cheese, ham and spinach, and onion.

Ingredients

- 2 lb turkey breast meat
- 1 cup chopped cooked spinach, drained well
- 1/2 lb ham
- 1 strip of bacon
- 1 rosemary sprig
- 1 onion
- 2 eggs
- Olive oil
- Salt, pepper, and the herbs of choice to taste
- Butcher's twine

Preparation

Begin by preparing the spinach and making the *frittata*. *Sauté* the onion and add the eggs. Stir the eggs for a few seconds, then let set. Add the ham and spinach and cook for a few more moments. When the bottom of the *frittata* has set, flip it onto a plate and return it to the pan to cook the other side. Set the finished *frittata* aside.

Set the turkey breast on a cutting board and make a horizontal cut almost all the way through it, about a 3/4 of an inch from the base. Open the breast like a book, make another cut, and open it again to obtain a rectangle of meat. Gently pound it with the flat of your knife or a smooth meat pounder to thin it, keeping it as rectangular as you can.

Lay the *frittata*, or the stuffing ingredients, over the meat, beginning with what will not melt, and season them to taste with salt, pepper, and whatever other herbs you like; I might go with some thyme and a tablespoon of minced

parsley. Roll the breast up into a log. Lay the bacon strip and rosemary sprig across the top, and tie the roll with butcher's twine so it resembles a salami. If you are including cheese in the filling be especially careful to make a good seal, otherwise it will melt and leak out.

Cooking

Fire your oven and let the temperature fall, leaving a small bed of coals. Roast the turkey roll in a moderately warm oven (400F-500F, or 4 Mississippis) for about 45 minutes.

Serve it sliced, with the pan drippings spooned over the top. Or, whisk 2 Tbs of butter and 1/2 cup Madeira to the pan drippings to make a sauce.

Roast Chicken, Potatoes and Sausage

This recipe is from the Forno Bravo Forum. You will have to use your imagination when putting it together. We are tracking this recipe down, and will add it in the next version of *Wood-Fired Cooking*!

"By far the best tasting dish I have made in my oven so far. Chicken, potato and Italian hot peppers."



Pollo Fricasseea (Chicken with White Wine)

Ingredients

- 1lb (or how much you want) chicken legs and thighs
- 1 onion, diced
- 1/4 cup good olive oil
- 1 cup white wine
- 1/4 cup pine nuts
- 1/4 cup olives

Preparation

Fire your oven until hot, and let the temperature fall a little. Keep your coals hot, as you need the heat of the oven to brown your chicken. In a medium hot pizza oven, place the onions and olive oil in either stainless steel or terracotta pot that has a lid. The chicken should fit on one layer.

Sauté the onion until it is translucent, which should be pretty quick.

Then add the chicken and brown. Depending on your oven, you could do this without turning the chicken. Add the wine and pine nuts and cover. Bake until the chicken falls from the bone—it should feel stewed. Add the olives at the end to heat through.

Serving

We had it with lentils in a vinaigrette and Tuscan white beans. The sauce is great. Our friends liked it.

I looked the recipe up on Google (pollo in fricasseea), and there are options where you flour the chicken before you brown it, add an egg yoke to thicken the sauce, add peas, and use a mix of white wine and chicken stock.

Either way, it's a great brick oven dish. A type of Italian *Coq au Vin*.



Grilled Chicken *a la Toscana* Cooked Under Bricks

4-6 servings

Ingredients

- 1 small (preferably free range) chicken, 3- 3 1/2 lbs
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 2 sprigs each, thyme and rosemary
- Olive oil for rubbing
- Kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp fresh cracked black pepper
- 2 lb firm, ripe plum tomatoes, cut in half
- 1 lb shallots, skin on, cut in half
- 4 fire bricks, double wrapped in foil

Preparation

Fire your oven to pizza heat, then let the temperature fall to 475°F-500°F degrees.

Remove and discard any lumps of fat from the inside of the chicken. Brine chicken for 2-4 hours (recipe below) in refrigeration. Rinse the chicken and pat very dry inside and out.

Place the chicken breast side down on a flat surface. With a pair of poultry shears, split the bird lengthwise along the backbone. Open it out, and press down with the heel of your hand to flatten completely. Turn the chicken skin side up and approaching from the edge, slide a finger under the skin of each of the breasts, making 2 little pockets. Repeat by creating a pocket on the thickest area of each thigh. Shove a sprig of herbs and slivers of garlic into each pocket.

Season the chicken liberally with salt and the cracked pepper.

Using a sharp knife, make slits in the skin near the tail and tuck the wing tips in to secure. The bird should be as flat as possible to ensure even cooking.

In a large cast-iron skillet or clay casserole, heat the olive oil over moderately high heat. When hot but not smoking, place the chicken skin side down in the skillet. Weigh it down with fire bricks wrapped in foil.

Place in the center of the wood-fired oven and cook until the skin is golden, about 15 minutes. Listen for sizzling!

Remove the weights and using tongs (so as not to pierce the skin), turn chicken over. Replace the weights, add the tomatoes and shallots and return to the oven to cook for another 15 minutes.

To test for doneness, pierce the thigh with a skewer. The chicken is done when the juices run clear. You may need to keep the chicken in the oven for another 20 minutes or until it is tender and legs pulls easily from the breast.

Transfer to a platter and cover loosely with foil. Let it rest for at least 10 minutes or up to 20. Carve and serve warm or at room temperature.



Roast Turkey Breast

Sometime you want turkey and gravy, but don't want to roast a whole turkey. Try this turkey recipe instead. Use a stainless steel pan to brown the vegetables on the bottom to help make gravy.

Ingredients

- 1 large turkey breast
- 1 onion
- 2 carrots
- 3 sticks of celery
- Olive oil

Preparation

Lay your turkey on a bed of onion, carrot and celery, skin side up. Add salt, pepper, herbs and olive oil to the bird, then 1/2 cup of water. Cover the turkey with foil. The foil and water let the turkey cook through without burning.

Cooking

Add the turkey to a hot oven, roughly 600°F, and let it roast for about 1 hour and 15 minutes. After about 1 hour, remove the foil, and let the turkey brown. Take the turkey out of the oven, cover, and let it rest for a few minutes.

Remove the turkey to a serving plate and put the pan back in the oven to finishing browning the vegetables. After a couple of minutes, put the pan on a medium burner and add 4 Tbs flour and a little extra butter to thicken the sauce. Lightly brown the flour, and then added chicken stock for gravy --- put the gravy through a strainer to remove the veggies. The kids were thrilled – this was the best gravy ever. As they said, great gravy with a little turkey on the side.

Serving

This dish works well with vegetables, such as green beans and cauliflower, roasted in terracotta pans in the oven. Add 1/2" water in the pan for steam and covering the pan with foil.

It isn't the thrill of a whole turkey, but you will enjoy it.



Roast Whole Turkey

Ingredients

- 1 medium-size turkey
- 1 onion
- 2 carrots
- 3 sticks of celery
- Olive oil
- Salt, pepper and herbs of choice

Preparation

Coat the turkey with olive oil, and then lay it on a bed of onion, carrot and celery, skin side up. Add salt, pepper, herbs and olive oil to the bird, then 1/2 cup of water. Cover the turkey with foil. The foil and water let the turkey cook through without burning.

Cooking

Fire your oven until hot, and then let the heat fall to a moderate temperature, roughly 450-500°F. If you have fired your oven for a longer period (2 hours or more), rake out the coals to allow the temperature to keep falling. If you do not have enough retained heat in the oven, you can leave a small fire, or coals at the start of cooking.

Add the turkey to your oven, and let it roast for about 1 hour and 45 minutes to 2 hours. After about 1 hour, remove the foil, and let the turkey brown. Take the turkey out of the oven, and covered it to rest.

Serve with oven roasted potatoes.



Brick Oven Roast Capon

The capon is the bird of choice for Christmas in Italy (it's a male castrated chicken, ouch). The capon is a little fattier than chicken, and has a great flavor. A 6-7lb bird is large enough for a small dinner party.

There are a couple of nice aspects to the recipe. First, it uses the heat of the oven and dome to brown and seal the bird, and it uses dessert wine and tomatoes to make a very rich and flavorful sauce/gravy. You turn the bird a number of times when the oven is still hot, and then cover it with foil for the 90 minute roasting period. Our visitors said it was the best meal they've had on their trip.

Ingredients

- One 6-7 lb capon
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 glove of garlic, smashed and minced
- 1 glove of garlic, slivered (optional)
- 5 Tbs olive oil
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 cup Vin Santo (I think any dessert wine will do)
- 1 can of peeled, chopped tomatoes

Preparation

Place the carrot, onion, smashed garlic and 3 Tbs olive oil into a metal cooking pan capable of holding a couple cups of liquid. Cut 6-8 slits in the bird meat and set the slivered garlic in the cuts. Place the bird in the pan, and coat it with the last 2 Tbs of olive oil.

Fire your oven until hot, then shovel out all the coals and let it rest for a few minutes until the temperature reaches 500°F. Make sure you have driven enough heat into the oven to roast for about 2 hours. You want a hot oven, which is capable of browning your bird from the dome heat, but not so hot that you burn everything in the first few minutes.

Cooking

Place the pan in the hot oven, and when the top of the bird starts to brown, turn the bird a quarter turn. Keep browning

and turning the bird until it is a nice medium brown. Cover the bird with two layers of aluminum foil, taking care to cover the tips of the wings and the legs.

Add the stock, Vin Santo and tomatoes. The liquids will cook into a great sauce, and the tomatoes will disappear.

Cook for 90 minutes, or until the bird is done.

Strain the sauce to remove the carrot and onion pieces, and skim off excess oil and fat. You can either use the sauce as is, or as the base for a thickened gravy.

Pollo Scallopini (Chicken Escalope)**Ingredients**

- 1 lb de-boned chicken breasts
- 2 Tbs olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 Tbs wine vinegar
- 1 Tbs balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbs capers
- Salt and Pepper

Preparation

Place the breasts between two pieces of waxed paper and pound flat with a rolling pin to a thickness of about 1/4".

Put the olive oil into a stainless steel or aluminum pan, add the chicken and turn to coat. A metal pan is used because you want the heat from the oven floor to quickly cook the bottom of the chicken.

Pour the lemon juice, vinegar, and capers over the meat; season with salt and pepper.

Fire your oven until hot, push the coals over, and keep the fire going. Cook the chicken in a hot oven with a live fire, without turning. It should take 4-6 minutes. The top of the chicken should be brown and bubbly, and the inside should be cooked through, but not dry.

Place one *escalope* on each plate and cover with cooking juices. Or, put the entire dish on a warm serving platter. Top with fresh lemon slices and serve immediately.

Baked Chicken with Rice

Ingredients

- 8 chicken drumsticks
- 1 cup of Arborio rice
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 garlic glove, smashed and chopped
- 1 zucchini, diced
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 2 Tbs olive oil
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 1 whole garlic bulb
- Saffron (optional)

Cooking

Fire your oven until hot, and then let the heat fall to moderate temperature, roughly 400-500°F. This dish can be cooked either with the coals in the oven, or the oven raked out. You need enough heat to fully cook the chicken and the rice and stock combination.

Using a terracotta pan in your oven, *sauté* the onions, garlic, zucchini, pepper in olive oil until tender.

Add the rice and *sauté* until slightly translucent – only a minute or so. Do not brown the rice.

Add the chicken and optionally, brown it slightly.

Place the whole garlic bulb in the center of the pan, arrange the chicken, and then add the stock. Bake until brown and the rice is done. Roughly 45 minutes.



Brick Oven Chicken Madeira

This is a brick oven version of a traditional dish.

• Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken cut into pieces
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, chopped and smashed
- 1lb mushrooms, chopped
- 1/2 cup peas
- 2 Tbs olive oil
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 1/2 cup Madeira (we used Vin Santo)
- Sage
- 5 Tbs butter
- Salt and pepper

Preparation

Use a terracotta baking pan with a lid large enough to hold the chicken without overlapping. If you don't have a lid, you can use foil.

This is a dish where you brown the ingredients in layers, adding the new ingredients on top of the browned ingredients. You don't have to stir anything.

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F. You want a hot enough oven to brown your ingredients before adding the liquid ingredients, so keep a bed of coals.

Add the oil, the onions, garlic, and mushrooms to the pan to brown.

Add the chicken, and return the pan to the hot oven to cook until the meat is a nice dark brown on top. It should take 15-20 minutes.

Add the stock, the Madeira, and the peas, cover and bake for another 30-40 minutes.

Remove the chicken to a plate, and let it rest, covered.

Pour the sauce out of the pan into a clean saucepan, skim off the fat, and then reduce it to your liking. Swirl in the 5 Tbs of butter right before you serve. Assemble the chicken on a platter and top with the sauce.

Serve with roast potatoes and oven roasted vegetables.

Brick Oven Roast Chicken and Fennel

Ingredients

- 4 lb chicken
- 1 onion, quartered
- Herbs of choice
- 2 fennel bulbs
- 1 garlic cloves, peeled, smashed and chopped
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 4 Tbs olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F. You want a hot enough oven to brown your ingredients before adding the liquid ingredients, so keep a bed of coals.

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F. You want a hot enough oven to brown your chicken and fennel, so keep a bed of coals.

Rinse the chicken, pat dry, and sprinkle the cavity with salt and pepper. Place the herbs inside the cavity. Rub the chicken with the olive oil, and season with salt and pepper.

Cut the top off the fennel bulbs and press the fennel greens and garlic into the chicken.

Bake for 30 minutes with a small fire on the side (if your oven needs the heat). The moisture in the oven means that you will not need to baste. If your oven is too hot, cover the chicken with foil (or just the wingtips) to keep the skin from burning.

Cut the fennel bulb into quarters and boil for 2-3 minutes.

Add the drained fennel and the white wine to the terracotta pan, surrounding the chicken, and then return the pan to the oven for an additional 30 minutes. The wine should reduce to a rich sauce.

Prick the thigh with a fork -- if the juices run clear, the chicken is cooked. Transfer to a serving platter.

Seared Chicken Breasts

Ingredients

- 3-4 chicken breasts, bone in
- 1 Tbs olive oil
- Salt, pepper, garlic and the herbs of choice to taste (or a premixed dry rub)
- Dry rub spiced (optional)

Preparation

Rub the chicken with the olive oil, salt, pepper and herbs. Or, try a dry rub.

Place the chicken breast skin side up in a stainless steel or cast iron pan that has a tight fitting lid.

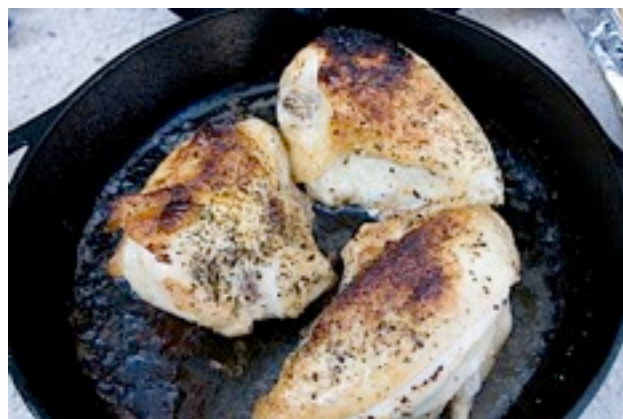
Cooking

Fire your oven and let the temperature fall somewhat to roughly 550-600°F, keeping a bed of coals on one side.

Add the pan to the oven and cook the chicken for a couple of minutes, until the tops of the chicken are brown.

Place the lid on the pan, and return the chicken to the oven to finish cooking, roughly 15-20 minutes.

Serve hot.



12. Fish and Seafood

Introduction

Seafood works very well with the high cooking temperatures and rapid cooking times that you have with a wood-fired oven. Your fish stays moist and does not dry out.

Also, you can try a layered chicken dish, such as our Sea Bass with Mushrooms and Arugula that cooks in four layers.

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- Roast Salmon with Vegetables
- Honey and Rosemary Salmon
- Sea Bass with Mushroom and Arugula

Roast Salmon with Vegetables

Ingredients

- 1 large Salmon filet
- 3 sticks celery, diced
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 Red pepper
- 2 Tbs fresh diced tomatoes, or tomato sauce
- Olive oil
- Rosemary
- Salt and pepper

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F, keeping a bed of coals.

Coat the fish with salt, pepper, oil and rosemary. Grilled it on a preheated Tuscan Grill, skin side down in a moderately hot oven. It will get some light sear marks.

Add the olive oil to a steel pan or baking sheet, and sauté the diced celery, onion, garlic and parsley. Then, add the salmon to the pan, skin side up, and coated it with honey.

Add a couple of tablespoons of tomato sauce, and returned the pan to bake for 15 minutes. Really nice. All done in the oven right after pizza. The salmon had been slightly seared, and it was very moist and the veggies were soft and had a wonderful flavor.



Honey and Rosemary Salmon

Ingredients

- 3 Tbs butter
- 1 large salmon fillet
- Salt and pepper
- 1 Tbs rosemary
- 3 Tbs honey

Cooking

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F. You want a hot enough oven to brown your salmon, so keep a bed of coals.

Salt, pepper and rosemary the flesh side of fish.

Place the butter in a terracotta or stainless steel pan and brown the butter in the pizza oven.

Place the fish flesh down in the butter for 5 minutes, so the rosemary and butter fuse and the fish is lightly browned.

Remove the pan, and flip the fish over, so the flesh is facing up. Pour the honey over the fish, return the pan and bake until the fish is done. Somewhere between 5 and 15 minutes.

If you like your salmon medium toward rare, the oven can give you a crispy outer side and a moist inside.



Sea Bass with Mushroom and Arugula

Ingredient (four layers)

- 2 carrots
- 1 Tbs diced spring onions or chives
- 1 onion
- 1 medium glove of garlic
- 2 stalks for celery
- 4 Tbs olive oil
- 2 lbs sea bass
- Salt and pepper
- 8 oz. white mushrooms, chopped
- 4 Tbs Dijon mustard
- 1 Tbs capers
- 1 cup Arugula, finely chopped
- One tomato, finely chopped
- 2 Tbs balsamic vinegar

Preparation

Whisk together the olive oil, capers and mustard, then mix with the chopped mushrooms.

Mix the Arugula, tomatoes and Balsamic.

Cooking

This dish works best in a terracotta pan that will hold all the fish in a single layer.

Fire the oven until 700°F, then push the fire to one site and let the oven rest for a few minutes to reach 500°F. You want a hot oven, which is capable of browning your vegetables from the dome heat, but not so hot that you burn everything in the first few minutes.

Layer 1: Place the onion, carrot, celery, spring onion, garlic and olive oil in the pan, and bake for 3-5 minutes, or until the onions and garlic are translucent and lightly brown.

Layer 2: Lay the fish over the vegetables.

Layer 3: Top with the mushrooms and mustard sauce. Return the pan to the oven to bake. When the mushrooms are brown, and the fish is baked, remove the pan from the oven

Layer 4: Top with the Arugula and Balsamic. Place the cooking pan on the table—take care to place all four

layers on every plate when serving.



13. Potatoes and Vegetables

Your brick oven cooks vegetables and potatoes exceptionally well—and incredibly fast. With a hot oven you can roast potatoes in 10-15 minutes, along with other baked side dishes.

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Gratin Potatoes

Ingredients

- 1 lb potatoes, washed, scrubbed and thinly sliced
- 1 onion
- 4 Tbs butter
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 4 Tbs grate parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper

Preparation

Rinse, and then thinly slice the potatoes and onion. We used a mandolin.

Layer 1/3 of your potatoes and onions in a terracotta baking dish. Dot with 1/3 of the butter, then salt and pepper.

Continue layering until you have used all the potatoes.

Pour the cream and stock into the dish, use the last of the butter, and cover the top with the cheese. Cover the dish either with a lid, or a layer of aluminum foil.

Cooking

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 450°F. You want a hot enough oven to bake the potatoes until soft, without your oven losing all of its heat. If you are baking this with other dishes, you should either fire your oven longer, or start at a higher temperature.

Place in a moderately hot oven for one hour. Remove the cover for the final 10 minutes.



Seared Tomatoes

Ingredients

- 20 whole, fresh tomatoes, halved
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup fresh herbs, chopped

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall slightly, while maintaining a live fire.

Take tomatoes and slice them in half and fry cut side in hot olive oil. Keep them well separated, not crowded so they brown, not steam. Do not move them, and let them brown for about 4 minutes. You can either sear the tomatoes in your Forno Bravo oven, or on a cook top.

Allow the tomatoes to cool, and then place the seared side up in a terracotta dish.

Use the wine vinegar to deglaze the frying pan. Then add the oil and vinegar mixture to the tomatoes. Top each tomato half with fresh herbs.

Return to your oven to bake and heat through, about 15 minutes.

Serve hot or cold.



Roast Eggplant, Pepper and Onions

This tasty dish is served on a flat dish set in three distinct piles, scoops of roast eggplant, slices of roast red pepper, and slices of translucent roasted onion, with a little olive oil over it all. In Spain, this type of vegetable is typically part of the first course that includes bread, salad and cocas.

Ingredients

- 2 eggplants, slices in half
- 4 onions, cut in half
- 4 Tbs olive oil
- 2 roast peppers (see recipe on page 83)

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F. You want a hot enough oven to brown your ingredients before adding the liquid ingredients, so keep a bed of coals.

Combine the eggplant and onions and olive oil in a terracotta roasting dish and add them to your oven. Brown the eggplant and glaze the onions.

Alternatively, you can roast the onions in a second terracotta pan, similar to the red onion recipe on page 74.

When the eggplant has browned on one side, you can turn them over. If they are browning too fast, and are not yet tender, you can either cover the pan with foil or a lid, or add stock to the vegetables.

After turning, the skin side is up and they baked a while longer. They almost look overdone and are starting to wrinkle a bit.

Remove the pan from oven and leave the eggplant and onion to cool. Then, remove the inner roasted eggplant from the skin and crust, serve and eat! The eggplant scoops should be more than a mouthful but easily transferred to your plate to cut and eat.

This dish can be served warm to cool, and you might have some bread to soak up the drippings.



Roast Fennel and Turnips

Roast fennel and baby turnips, including some onions and roasted garlic for an easy side vegetable. The roasted garlic adds some flavor and is reserved for later use on pizzas and sandwiches.

Ingredient

- 2 fennel bulbs
- 2 baby turnips
- 4-5 whole garlic bulbs
- 2 Tbs olive oil
- 1/2 cup white wine
- Salt and pepper

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F. You want a hot enough oven to brown your fennel, a very firm vegetable, so keep a bed of coals.

Cut the fennel and turnips into quarters or sixths, lengthwise. If you are in a hurry, you can parboil them.

Place the fennel, turnips and garlic in an oval or round terracotta baking dish, coat with olive oil and add the wine and garlic. Season with salt and pepper.

Place in a moderate to hot oven for 30 minutes, or until the fennel is soft when pierced with a fork. If the tops are browning too fast, cover with foil, then remove the foil for the last few minutes. The wine should reduce to make a nicely flavored sauce.

Put the baking dish straight on the table.

Serve hot or cold.



Roast Red Onions in Honey Balsamic

Ingredients

- 6-8 red onions, halved
- 1 cup white wine
- 1/2 cup honey
- 4 Tbs thyme
- 4 Tbs Balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F. You want a hot enough oven to glaze the onions, so keep a bed of coals.

Clean onions by cutting off each end and the outer skin, then cut the onions in half so they rest on the cleaned ends. Place them in an oiled baking dish with the center up, and level if you can slice carefully.

Then, make up a sauce using white wine, honey, thyme and balsamic vinegar. Reduce this mixture, either on a cook top, or in your Forno Bravo oven, until it thickens. Pour half this mixture over your onions and put in the oven.

The onions will open up as they bake and I add the second half of the honey balsamic mixture. They will bake for about 30 to 45 minutes.

These are heavenly when placed between the eggplant and red peppers – with a little olive oil drizzled on top.

And awesome cold the next day too!



Eggplant Parmesan

Ingredients

- 1 eggplant, cut into 1/4" slices, salted to drain, and rinsed
- 3-4 Tbs olive oil
- 1 28oz can San Marzano tomatoes
- 1/2 cup grated Pecorino
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan
- 1/4 cup fresh, chopped basil
- Salt

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 550°F, maintaining a live fire. You will brown the eggplant in the oven before assembling the casserole. While you are assembling your dish, the oven temperature will continue to fall where you can bake the casserole, without burning it.

Brush the eggplant with olive oil and broil until brown, either in flat pan or grill pan/steel or cast iron. You don't have to flip it. It will only take a few minutes.

Assemble the casserole by layering the browned eggplant, tomatoes, Pecorino, and basil until it's gone. Save a little sauce for the top. Top with the Parmesan.

Bake for 30 minutes. If your oven is too hot, cover the pan with foil until the last few minutes.



Lentils in Vinaigrette

Ingredients

- 2-3 carrots, chopped
- 2-3 celery sticks, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 cup lentils
- 3 cups water
- 1/4 cup vinaigrette (your favorite)

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F. You can rake out the coals if you are cooking other low to moderate temperature dishes, or leave them if your other dishes require higher heat. The lentils themselves will bake in one hour in a moderate 400°F oven.

Sauté the vegetables in a terracotta baking dish until lightly brown. Add the lentils and water. Our Forno Bravo bakeware won't crack from the temperature change.

Cover and bake for an hour. You don't have to drain the lentils, so just add your vinaigrette and let it sit for a minute.

It's easier than lentils on the cook top and tastes much better.



Rosemary Roast Potatoes

Ingredients

- 1 lb potatoes, washed, scrubbed and cut into 1" cubes
- 4 Tbs olive oil
- 2 tsp rosemary
- Salt and pepper

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F. You want a hot enough oven to brown your potatoes, without burning at the bottom. If your oven is hot, try the Fast Roast Potatoes recipe that follows.

Add the potatoes, chopped rosemary leaves and olive oil to a terracotta baking dish.

Still to coat the potatoes.

Roast in a moderately hot oven for 30-40 minutes, stirring periodically to prevent sticking.



Fast Roast Potatoes

Ingredients

- 1 lb potatoes, washed, scrubbed and cut into 1" cubes
- 4 Tbs olive oil
- 2 tsp rosemary
- Salt and pepper

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall slightly to about 600°F, keeping a live fire. You want a hot oven to quickly roast (almost fry) your potatoes.

Place a steel, cast iron or aluminum pan in a hot oven for a few minutes to heat it up. Add olive oil and return to the oven until the oil is hot, but not smoking.

Place the potatoes in the pan, and add the rosemary. Season with salt and pepper. Stir to coat the potatoes with the oil.

Cook for 10-15 minutes, until the potatoes are brown, and tender when pieced with a fork. You might need to turn the potatoes once, depending on where you oven is the hottest.

We do not peel our potatoes, or parboil them.

You need to use a metal pan to make this recipe work. Try a stainless steel pan with an internal copper layer for distributing the heat.

Roast Artichokes

Ingredients

- 8 smaller to medium size artichokes
- 1 cup white wine
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed and chopped
- 2 Tbs olive oil
- 1 lemon, juice and the rind removed and chopped

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F. Maintain a bed of coals for roasting the artichokes, but this dish does not require a hot oven.

You want your artichokes to be closed on the top -- then they are the most fresh and tender.

Mixed your marinade from the wine, garlic, olive oil and lemon.

Cut back the stem, and cut the top 1/4 or so off the top of the artichoke. Then add the marinade to the artichokes, making sure it goes down between the leaves. This will help in the steaming of the insides.

Spread out the fire coals and tossed the artichokes on top. Then proceeded to turn them periodically for about 30-45 minutes. They looked like a burnt offering to the gods but once you got inside they were great.

Peel off the outer burnt leaves, eat the lower part of subsequent leaves between your teeth, and then have the artichoke heart as the finale.



Tuscan-style Roasted Summer Vegetables on Rosemary Skewers with Herb Pesto

Serve 1-2 skewers per person with Pistachio-Parsley-Mint Pesto on the side.

Ingredients

- 1 lb mixed peppers
- 1 lb red or purple potatoes
- 1 medium globe eggplant
- 4 small zucchini
- 3 yellow sunburst squash
- 4 torpedo onions
- Kosher salt
- Fresh ground black pepper
- A dozen 8" rosemary stalks, 5" or so stripped of leaves for skewering

Preparation

Preheat your oven, and let the temperature fall to 450°F, keeping a bed of coals.

Parboil the potatoes for 5 minutes just to start the cooking.

Slice vegetables into big chunks suitable for skewers and grilling, and toss all the vegetables in olive oil and lightly salt and pepper.

Thread onto skewers in an assortment, and place the skewers on a preheated Tuscan Grill over hot coals.

Cook for 5 minutes or so and then turn. Continue to grill and turn until the vegetables are cooked through. Remove from the oven or grill and set aside to cool slightly.

Pistachio-Parsley-Mint Pesto

Makes 3 cups

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup shelled roasted pistachios
- 3 cloves roasted garlic
- 1/2 tsp capers, rinsed and drained
- Juice of 2 lemons
- 2 cups coarsely-chopped Italian parsley leaves (lightly packed)
- 2 cups fresh mint leaves - (lightly packed)
- 1 cup olive oil

- Kosher salt to taste

Preparation

Rub nuts in a towel to remove any loose skins. Lift nuts from towel and place in a food processor or blender. Add parsley, mint, and oil; whirl until finely ground. Add salt to taste. Use, or cover and chill up to 2 days. Freeze airtight in small portions to store longer.



Roasted Eggplant, Red Pepper and Herb-Crusted Goat Cheese Gratin

Serves 8

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lb eggplant, sliced
- Olive oil
- 1 cup toasted bread crumbs
- 1/4 Tbs almond meal
- 2 red peppers, roasted, peeled and seeded
- 3 cups tomatoes, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1 head roasted garlic, mashed
- 1 Tbs fresh thyme leaves
- Pinch of sugar
- Kosher salt
- Fresh ground black pepper
- 12 oz herb-crusted goat cheese, thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup oil-cured black olives, pitted and halved
- 1/2 cup fresh Italian parsley leaves

Preparation

Preheat your oven, then let the temperature fall to 375°F - 400°F.

Sauté the eggplant slices in olive oil for 2 minutes on each side. Set aside on paper towels to drain. Lightly salt.

Cut red peppers into pieces similar to the eggplant slices.

Combine the tomatoes with the mashed garlic, thyme and salt, sugar and pepper to taste.

Brush a casserole with olive oil and dust with a mixture of bread crumbs and almond meal. Set remainder of crumb mixture aside for later use.

Line the casserole with one third of the tomato mixture. Then layer on slices of eggplant, followed by goat cheese, then red pepper then bread crumbs followed by sliced olives. Salt and pepper each layer as you go.

Repeat layers, finishing the casserole with tomatoes, parsley, goat cheese and the bread crumb mixture on top.

Bake for 30-35 minutes or until the casserole is bubbly. Remove from heat and let sit for 10 minutes before portioning and serving.

Roasted Artichokes

Ingredients

- 2 medium-sized artichokes
- Fine grind sea salt
- Olive oil
- 2 Meyer or eureka lemons, cut into wedges or 1/4" rounds

Preparation

Fire oven, and let the temperature fall to 450°F, or so.

Push the coals to one side of the oven.

Remove a few of the outer leaves from the artichokes. Cut the artichokes in half and remove the choke.

Lightly salt the exposed surface with sea salt. Place the artichokes cut side down in a cast iron skillet.

Fill the skillet with 1/2" or so of olive oil and add water to bring the liquid level to about one inch.

Add the lemon pieces in between the artichokes.

Place the skillet in the oven about 5 inches from the embers.

Roast for about 12-15 minutes or until the artichoke hearts are tender.

Remove from the oven and place the skillet on a rack to cool slightly.

Use the juices from the roasting to:

Make a simple aioli to serve with the artichokes or

Make a simple dipping vinaigrette by whisking olive oil into the juices.



Roast Peppers

Ingredients

- 3-4 whole red, yellow or orange peppers
- Vinaigrette (optional)

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F, maintaining a bed of coals for roasting the peppers.

Toss the whole peppers either directly on the hot coals, on the cooking floor or in a metal or cast iron pan.

Keep turning until blackened on all sides, and they are beginning to collapse. It will take only a few minutes. Use protective gloves and a peel to move and remove the peppers.

Remove from the oven and place in a paper bag to cool.

Peel the skins and remove the seeds, and then slice.

Serving

You can serve roast peppers hot or cold, plain or with a dressing. They can be used in other dishes and in pasta sauces.



Ratatouille

This is the best eggplant dish we've had yet. It bakes in a single, covered terracotta baking pan, and uses both dome heat and hearth heat to make a great dish.

Ingredient

- 2 medium eggplants
- 2 bell peppers (at least one red)
- 1 can of fresh peeled tomatoes, or 6 fresh tomatoes, cored and peeled
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 large (or 2 medium) garlic cloves, smashed
- 5-6 Tbs olive oil

Preparation

Remove the eggplant core and seeds, and chop into 1/4" cubes; cover liberally with salt and let drain in a colander for about an hour, rinse well.

Core and sliver the pepper into 2" matchsticks.

Cooking

Fire the oven until hot, then push the fire to one site and let the oven rest for a few minutes until roughly 500-550°F. Shovel out any excess coals. You want a hot oven, which is capable of browning your vegetable, but not so hot that you burn everything in the first few minutes.

Place the onion, garlic and 3 Tbs olive oil in the pan, and bake for 3-5 minutes, or until the onions and garlic are translucent and lightly browned.

Add the eggplant, and brush with 1-2 Tbs olive oil and bake for 5-7 minutes, or until they are medium brown.

Add the peppers, brush with 1 Tbs olive oil and bake for 3-5 minutes, or until the tips are brown.

Add the tomatoes, and stir to mix. Cover, and push to the coolest edge of the oven. Cook for 10-15 minutes, or until bubbling and well-mixed. The tomatoes should almost disappear into the sauce.

If your oven is too hot, and the dish is burning, or drying out, let it rest at the oven opening, where it will stay warm and let the flavors continue to mix.

Verde Trovato (Potatoes and Found Greens)

Ingredients

- 1 lb potatoes, washed, scrubbed and cut into 1" cubes
- 3 cups of any greens—lettuce, chard, kale, Arugula, mustard, etc.
- 4 Tbs cooking olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled, smashed and chopped
- 2 tsp rosemary
- Salt and pepper

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F, maintaining a bed of coals to help brown your potatoes.

Rinse and roughly chop your greens. The idea is to use up old salad and vegetables that are nice enough to eat, but not good enough to feature in a fresh dish.

Add 2 Tbs olive oil and garlic to a steel, cast iron or aluminum pan and set in a hot oven for a few minutes. Don't burn the garlic.

Add the greens and cook for a few minutes, until the moisture is gone and greens are reduced. They should be dry, but not burned.

Add 2 Tbs olive oil and potatoes. Mix the green and the potatoes, and make sure the potatoes are coated.

Place in a moderately hot oven for 30-45 minutes. If the tops are browning too fast, cover with foil, then remove the foil for the last 15 minutes. Don't turn the potatoes and greens after they have started cooking, because you want the bottom of the dish to be nicely browned and crunchy.

Roast Asparagus

Ingredients

- 1 lb fresh, thin asparagus
- 2 Tbs olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Juice of 1 lemon (optional)

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F, maintaining a bed of coals to lightly brown the asparagus.

Remove the tough asparagus stems.

Add 2 Tbs olive oil and the asparagus to a stainless steel or cast iron pan. Toss to mix, and then season with salt and pepper.

Roast in a moderate oven for a few minutes, until lightly brown but still a little crisp.

Options

Splash the lemon juice into the hot pan right before serving. It will sizzle and reduce to make a nice sauce.



14. Rice, Risotto and Paella

Introduction

We've been traveling to the Mediterranean coast of Spain for 15 years, and to this day, *Paella* is my favorite dish. If I could be beamed anywhere in the world for a single meal, it would be to the Valenciana coast for a sea food *Paella*. The dish was first created in a small village near Valencia, where a freshwater delta, the Mediterranean and the sun intersect to provide the essential ingredients for *Paella*: Arborio rice, fresh vegetables, tomatoes, olive oil, fish, mussels, prawns, and chicken (and rabbit and pork).

I remember seeing older ladies taking their large *Paella* pans to the community ovens to bake them in the reserved heat after the bread was finished.

Risotto originates from the north of Italy, where today there are miles of rice fields growing Arborio rice—perfect for *Risotto*. The rest of Italy quickly adopted this creamy rice dish, and there are localized versions found throughout northern and central Italy. Tuscany, with its wonderful Porcini mushrooms, brings us *Risotto Funghi Porcini*, while our favorite town of San Gimignano, a center for Saffron since medieval times, is home to the golden colored *Risotto Safrano*.

Your brick oven makes wonderful *Risotto* and *Paella*. You can use either a traditional *Paella* pan (a round pan with sloping sides made from thin steel) or a round aluminum pan. A modern tri-layer pan might be a little more forgiving, as it uses a copper layer to more evenly distribute the oven floor's heat, but see which works best in your oven. Also, see what size pan you can get through your oven door.

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- Baked Rice with Vegetables
- Baked *Risotto* with Asparagus and Swiss Chard
- *Risotto al Porcini*

Baked Rice with Vegetables

Ingredients

- 1 cups Arborio rice
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 cloves garlic, peeled, smashed and chopped
- 1 red pepper, chopped (no seeds)
- 1 tomato, cored and chopped (no seeds)
- 1 zucchini, chopped
- 3 Tbs olive oil
- 3 cups hot beef or chicken stock

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches 700°F, and then allow the temperature to fall to about 500°F, maintaining a bed of coals for sautéing the rice and vegetables and to bake the rice.

Heat a terracotta baking dish in a moderately hot fired oven, and then add olive oil.

Sauté the chopped vegetables for 3-4 minutes, or until soft and lightly brow, then remove from the pan. Alternatively, you can *sauté* the vegetables in a pan on your cook top.

Add the onion, garlic, and more olive oil to the empty terracotta pan, and bake for 2-3 minutes, until translucent. Add the rice and stir to coat, and then sauté the rice for 2-3 minutes. Do not brown the rice.

Bake for 20-30 minutes. Rotate the dish a few times if you have coals or a fire in your oven, and one side is hotter than the other.



Baked Risotto with Asparagus and Swiss Chard

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 2 Tbs olive oil
- 1 medium onion, minced
- Kosher salt
- 1 cup Arborio rice
- 2 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 4 cups loosely packed chopped fresh chard leaves
- Chard stems from chard leaves, diced
- 1 lb young asparagus spears, trimmed and cut into diagonal slices
- 1/4 tsp fresh grated nutmeg
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese

Preparation

Fire your oven, and let the temperature fall to about 400-450°F.

On cook top, heat the olive oil and add the onion and a pinch of salt. Cook until the onion is soft and translucent. Add the rice, stirring to coat with the oil. This can also be done in the oven. Add the stock, wine, chard leaves and stems, asparagus, nutmeg, teaspoon of salt and bring to a simmer. Stir in half of the cheese.

Transfer to a buttered heat-resistant terracotta casserole and smooth out the top. Sprinkle with the rest of the cheese and cover with foil.

Place the baking dish on the floor of the oven near the center. Bake until the rice is cooked through and has absorbed most of the liquid, 20-30 minutes or so. The rice should be moist but not soupy. Remove the foil cover for the last 10 minutes of baking to create a beautiful golden crust and to add smoky flavor.

Serve immediately.



Risotto al Porcini

Ingredients

- 1 cups Arborio rice (long grain rice won't work)
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 Tbs cooking olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, peeled, smashed and chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh mushrooms -- button Portobello, etc., chopped
- 1/4 cup dried porcini mushrooms
- 3 cups hot beef stock
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1/4 cup Parmesan, freshly grated
- 1 Tbs butter

Preparation

Hydrate your dried porcini mushrooms in 1 cup of warm water for 20 minutes. Chop the mushroom and put them in bowl, and reserve the liquid (it will be a little gritty, so either pour carefully to leave the grit behind, or pour through a strainer or cheesecloth).

Add the fresh mushrooms and 1 Tbs olive oil to a steel, cast iron or aluminum pan and set in a hot oven for a few minutes. Add the white wine, and cook for a few minutes, until the wine is reduced, but not gone. Remove the mushrooms from the pan, and add them to the porcini mushrooms (where they will pick up flavor by hanging out together).

Add the remaining 2 Tbs olive oil, onions and garlic to the pan, and set in a hot oven for a few minutes. Don't burn the garlic.

Add the rice, and stir to coat the rice with the olive oil. Return the pan to a hot oven for a few minutes to *sauté* the rice. Do not let the rice turn brown.

Add 2 cups of the stock to the rice and stir the mixture. Return the pan to the oven. The technique with *Risotto* is to continue to stir the rice and to keep the mixture wet with stock -- this allows the rice to absorb the liquid, and the liquid to mix with the rice's starch to become creamy.

Add 1 cup of stock a time, stir the mixture and return to the oven.

When you have 1 cup of stock left (it should take about 20 minutes), your rice should be nearly ready, but still a tiny bit crunch left inside. Don't forget that one of the characteristics of Arborio rice is that it stays firm in the center, and doesn't go mushy. At this point you are ready to finish the dish.

Add the mushrooms, the last cup of stock and half (1/4 cup) of the Parmesan and stir. Return to pan to the oven to melt the cheese and heat the dish through.

Remove the pan and cover the rice with the remaining Parmesan and a little cracked pepper. Serve immediately.

Have everything else ready and bring the *Risotto* out last. Your *Risotto* will continue to cook and absorb the liquid after you have taken the pan from the oven, so it will be at its best the second you take it from the oven -- moist and creamy, not dry or paste-like.

Don't be afraid to serve yours a little soupy. It will firm up as it rests, and it is a more authentic dish this way.

15. Soups and Beans

Introduction

Use the retained heat in your oven to slowly bake beans. Try preparing dry white Italian Cannellini beans the next day, after you have fired your oven for a party.

Index

- Baked Beans
- White Bean and Arugula Gratin

Baked Beans

Ingredients

Start with a wide variety of canned beans and separate into different batches depending on how long you want them to cook:

Hearty beans go in first

- Dark red kidney beans, light red kidney beans, garbanzos beans or chickpeas, red beans, pinto beans, black beans

More delicate beans go in later, once the mixture begins to simmer

- Navy beans, cannellini beans, butter beans, baby lima beans

The sauce

- Tomato juice, tomato puree, diced tomatoes and/or tomato paste. (48 ounces or more)
- Other liquid includes wine and soup stock, as needed.
- 1/2 cup of BBQ sauce or some liquid smoke
- 2 onions, diced and sautéed
- 2 garlic cloves, diced
- 1-2 green pepper, diced
- Dashes of Worcestershire and hot sauces
- Dried or fresh spices, including chives, celery seed, black pepper, basil, oregano, coriander, chili pepper flakes
- 2 Tbs or more of honey or brown sugar, to taste
- 1/4 cup or more apple cider vinegar, to taste
- 1 Tbs each beef and vegetable Better than Bouillon stock base

Meat

- 1 - 2 lbs bacon, thick sliced, cut in one inch pieces
- 1 - 2 lbs ground beef, turkey, venison, rabbit,
- Sausage (optional)

Preparation

Drain and rinse the beans with fresh water in a colander. Start with the more hearty beans, and add the more delicate beans after the cooking has begun. Start cooking the meat mixture and onion, garlic, pepper on the stove, then finish the cooking in the oven for 1-3 hours, depending on the heat. This will work well in a low heat

oven, just might want some smoke from the coals for flavor. You might also need a cover or more liquid in a hotter oven if they dry out too much.



Note on dried beans: Use dried beans to reduce the unwanted salt and preservatives.

Note on Liquid: It often seems tough to stir at first. The mixture needs enough liquid to heat up and be able to stir it gently without breaking the beans too much. That's why I've used the tomato juice and/or red wine and/or soup stock. As it cooks it will thicken by some reduction and the broken beans, or you can thicken some with potato flakes later. I've usually got it covered in a roaster and just simmering for a couple of hours).

This is a very flexible dish you can adjust to individual tastes. The bean mixture is very tasty. Use more of what you like.

White Bean and Arugula Gratin

Ingredients

- 1 onion diced
- 1 zucchini diced
- 1 red pepper diced
- 1 garlic clove, smashed and chopped (optional)
- 3 Tbs olive oil
- 2 cup Arugula
- 2 cans white beans (imported are better)
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1/2 cup stock
- 1/2 cup bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan, grated

Optional

- Pinch red pepper
- Capers
- Sun-dried tomatoes
- Pine nuts

Cooking

Fire your oven, and let the temperature call until moderately hot, roughly 450 – 550°F.

Add the first four ingredients, and the olive oil to a terracotta pan with a lid, and put in the oven with the lid off, until lightly browned.

Add the Arugula and return to the oven until wilted.

Add the white beans, stock, and wine.

Mix together the breadcrumbs and the Parmesan. Cover the dish with the breadcrumb mixture.

Cover and bake. Take off the lid off the pan for the last few minutes to brown.



16. Desserts and Dolce

Introduction

Try a dessert pizza, or for a more traditional Dolce, rake out your oven and let the temperature fall to gently bake desserts.

Index

- Dessert Pizza with Mascarpone
- Chocolate and Strawberry Pizza
- Baked Figs with Greek Yogurt and Honey
- Roasted Pear-Apple *Crostata*

Dessert Pizza with Mascarpone

Here is the recipe for the Dessert Pizza we made at 10 Speed Press.

Ingredients

Dessert Pizza Dough (four dough balls, for up to 16 desserts)

- 500 gr. Caputo pizza flour
- 300 gr. water (60% hydration)
- 1 Tbs olive oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp instant dry yeast
- Rind of one lemon

The lemon gives the dough a nice, tangy flavor that comes through on the finished dessert.

The toppings

- Mascarpone
- Pine nuts
- Olive oil
- Powdered sugar
- Crème fraiche
- Fresh fruit

Preparation

Make your dough as you would regular pizza dough, and then shape into four dough balls.

Shape each ball into 6"-7" rounds, leaving finger impressions. Keep them thick, like a fat little Focaccia.

Cover with olive oil, and then top with 6-8 dollops of Mascarpone. You don't have to spread them out. Top that with 2 Tbs of pine nuts.

Bake in an oven that has fallen from high pizza heat to around 600°F, with a live fire.

Quarter or halve the pizza, then top with crème fraiche and powdered sugar. Then top with fresh fruit.

It's almost like a bread pudding below the fruit and cream. The fruit isn't cooked, and stays fresh.



Chocolate and Strawberry Pizza

Chocolate and strawberry pizza is the perfect end to a pizza dinner!

Ingredients

- Your preferred pizza dough
- 1/2 lb chocolate bar (your preference, try semi bitter), grated
- 1/2 – 1 lb strawberries, cleaned and chopped

Preparation

Fire your oven until it reaches pizza heat.

Shape your pizza dough as usual (in this case, you could use the rolling pin, if you like).

Sprinkle grated chocolate all over the shaped dough, and then add the strawberries.

Cook until the pizza rim is browned and the chocolate melted—about 2 minutes.

Eat too many slices!

Options

Blend the chocolate with 2 Tbs of milk or cream to soften the topping and give it a milder taste.

Blend the chocolate with 2 Tbs of condensed milk to make a sweeter, heavier topping.



Baked Figs with Greek Yogurt and Honey

Figs are a very traditional Mediterranean food, and we have had access to fig trees in various houses in Europe—including our summer rental in Provence. I think we'll plant a fig tree at our next house in North America.

This dish uses the top and bottom heat of a brick oven to heat the figs, brown the top of the dish into a nice glaze, and make a nice natural sauce.

Ingredient

- 1 lb of ripe figs (about 4-6 per person)
- 4 Tbs of honey
- 1 container of Greek yogurt

Preparation

Cut the figs in half and arrange in a terracotta pan with the cut side up.

Drizzle the honey over the figs.

Cooking

Using heat retained in your brick oven from whatever you have cooked for dinner, bake the figs uncovered until they are heated through, and the tops are brown and glazed.

The oven should be moderately hot, roughly 400°F. This only takes a few minutes in a moderately hot oven, so bake the figs right before you serve them.

Drizzle the Greek yogurt over the hot figs and put the baking dish directly on the table.

Roasted Pear-Apple *Crostata*

Recipe to come.



About the Author

James Bairey



James Bairey, a former Silicon Valley entrepreneur, is CEO and founder of Forno Bravo, LLC. He is an avid amateur baker, and is enamored with brick ovens. James has built wood-fired ovens across the U.S. and Italy, both from scratch and from Forno Bravo kits. It was his experience with other brick ovens that led him to create the Pompeii Oven design and the popular [Forno Bravo Forum](#). After a long career in the computer industry, where he helped launch a number of successful Internet companies, James is now having a great time building Forno Bravo into the

leading supplier of Italian pizza ovens and pizza ingredients for home owners, restaurants, pizzerias and bakeries. Today, Forno Bravo has dealers across North American, and around the world, and Forno Bravo ovens are in use in North America, Holland, Belgium, the Philippines, Brazil, Thailand, Japan, England, Ireland, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, Israel, Grenada, Bahrain, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and the Virgin Islands.

Notes