

Instructions for using your potjie the first time

Congratulations on your African cast-iron pot! In South Africa it is called a potjie. We wish you lots of joy with it! Here are some instructions when using your potjie for the first time. The potjie is treated with oil for protection. Now it must be cleaned and prepared for cooking.

1. *Fill the potjie with hot water and wash it inside with dishwashing liquid. Don't forget the lid!*
2. *Dry the potjie and lid carefully with a dry cloth.*
3. *Grease the potjie and lid on the inside with vegetable cooking oil. This is extra important in the beginning, after you have used the pot. When you have used the potjie for some time, you do not have to grease it every time, only now and then.*
4. *Before using the potjie to cook in, you will have to heat it with cooking oil inside. Pour in a few table spoons of oil and spread it around. The oil will soak into the small pores of the cast iron potjie, improving its' frying qualities and giving it protection. Heat the potjie carefully, placing it over hot coals or in the oven for a few minutes until the oil is sufficiently hot, smoking slightly.*
5. *Your potjie is now ready to be used!*



Some tips for using the potjie for the first time

When you place the pot in the fireplace, or at a hot surface on a stove, it's important that you have something in it. It must not be dry! Therefore, pour some liquid (water is good) or oil every time you start cooking in it. Please be careful when adding large amounts of cold liquid to a hot potjie, even if it's filled with food. If you are unlucky, your potjie can crack because of this! This is why we always use pre-heated water from a flask when adding extra water to boiling rice, for example. When adding cold liquids, for example fresh cream, we add it in smaller portions stirring all the time.

Start on low heat

It's easier to heat up a potjie than cool it off. Therefore, start on low heat, for example, if you are browning butter or oil for frying or oil for deep frying. We usually say that you can let a small onion sliver "lie" in the potjie at the beginning, so that you can see how warm the oil is. If it heats up too quickly, remove the potjie from the heat and let it cool off. You may sometimes need to move the coals from underneath the pot, so that the potjie stands in a ring having coals around it for an optimal low heat.

A fire on the side

Keeping a fire burning near your potjie adds a cosy atmosphere and you can continuously get new warm coals. Listen to the sound of your potjie! If you hear a loud bubbling boil from two metres away - it's too hot. Then, take the coal scoop and rake the coals away from the potjie to cool it off a bit, and it will simmer instead. By rotating your potjie in the fireplace, you also get heat from all sides. Hot coals will heat the potjie more evenly, but if you want to speed heat, then place it directly on the fire. If you always cook directly over a burning fire or gas flame, the iron walls of the potjie may weaken. We therefore recommend that you mostly cook over hot coals.

To wash a potjie

After you are finished cooking, wash the potjie with warm water and dishwashing liquid, rinse and dry carefully. Grease inside with oil. Good luck & have fun! Åsa & Nolan