

## Into the Frying Pan

I'm not one for fancy kitchen tools. In fact the two most elaborate gadgets in my kitchen are my Cuisinart (with a broken tube feed) and an ice-cream maker, both of which were wedding gifts. So, I won't give you a list of expense items you need to run out and purchase in order to become a great cook. One thing though, I know every home cook should have is a large, cast iron frying pan; the older the better! The best thing about a cast iron skillet is its multi uses. They can be used at extremely high temperatures, go from the stove to the oven, and can even be used on an outdoor grill. I have a 6 inch for fried eggs, a 9 inch for grilling sandwiches, and a 12 inch for fried chicken, pork chops, sautéing vegetables, pretty much anything.

I recently found out that my 12 inch skillet has another use, as a handy security device. A few months ago, our neighbors' house was broken into. I was terrified, but my ever adventurous daughter immediately readied herself for action. She pulled on her coat and boots, then yelled from the mud room "Come on, Daddy, you grab the flashlight and I'll get Momma's pan. Let's go investigate!"

For those who were not fortunate enough to inherit one these treasures from their grandmother, don't worry. I've found them at many second-hand stores for under \$10. Usually what you'll find is a sticky, rusted thing that looks like it's ready for the trash, but that's exactly what you want. DO NOT buy a new cast iron pan! It will not be properly seasoned until your grandchildren are ready for it. We'll just get that old one fixed up and ready to become a regular fixture in your kitchen.

Here's how to restore a rusted, dirty cast iron skillet:

1. Clean the skillet with hot, soapy water. Use steel wool if needed (this is one of the few times your skillet should need soap).
2. Place your pan in a 300 degree oven for about 10 minutes.
3. Remove from the oven and add fat (coconut oil, olive oil, even animal fat if handy) and a generously helping of kosher salt in to the center.
4. Use a rag to work the oil and salt in to all parts of the skillet.
5. Rinse the skillet with hot water and put back into the oven until it is mostly dry.
6. Put it on the stovetop on medium heat with a few tablespoons of fat and work it with another rag. Let it heat and "cure" on the burner for about 5 minutes.
7. Carefully pour the oil out leaving just enough to coat the pan. Bake for 90 minutes at 300 degrees.

The first time you use your pan, cook bacon. The bacon fat really seals the deal. After that, your pan will be ready to cook anything from scrambled eggs to cobbler in the oven. Just remember to heat it well on the stove and add some sort of fat before cooking. For cleaning, just rinse well with hot water, scrape any food bits, rinse again and dry on a warm burner. I like to leave my pans stacked in a nest on the stove.

## Recipes

### Any Day of the Week Steak

Growing up, much to my mother's horror, I hated steak. She would salt it and stick it under the broiler until she got it to that just right shoe leather consistency. Steak night ended up being really great for our dog waiting under the table for my portion. It was years before I would even consider cooking a steak for myself. But, living with a husband and daughter who demand it regularly I had to figure something out. After much trial and error, this is what I came up with. Sorry, Mom.

### Ingredients

1 flat iron steak  
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
1 tablespoon olive oil (plus more for cooking)  
1 teaspoon any dry spice (fennel pollen, Indian curry or garlic salt are all nice)

1. In a Ziploc bag add the mustard, olive oil, and spices. Squish these together to form a paste. (CT) Add the steak and use the bag to massage the marinade into the meat. Marinate for at least a half-hour at room temperature. You can marinate the meat longer in the fridge, just be sure to bring it up to room temperature before cooking.
2. Heat a cast iron pan on high heat. Right before cooking drizzle the pan with a good amount of oil.
3. Salt each side of the steak then place it into the hot pan.
4. Cook on each side for 7-8 minutes turning it only once.
5. Let it rest for at least 10 minutes before carving. Cut against the grain.