

WHAT IS TERRACOTTA?

Terracotta is a reddish/brown colored earthenware clay that is kiln-fired at low temperatures. Iron compounds and heat intensity are responsible for terracotta's brownish-orange color. The color of terracotta earthenware may range from earthy shades of brown to lively reds. After firing, the clay loses its water and becomes a solid, but still porous material – terracotta. After being shaped into the desired form, terracotta can be glazed, which makes it waterproof and easy to clean.

People have used terracotta throughout history for pottery and sculpture, as well as for bricks and roof tiles. Terracotta, which in Italian means “baked earth,” is one of the oldest materials used for cooking food. Ancient Romans cooked in this earthenware, and now many chefs around the world are keeping this old tradition alive.

USING TERRACOTTA IN THE KITCHEN:

This type of fired clay is perfect for long cooking over low heat. Terracotta pots are suitable for simmering, slow cooking, roasting, frying, baking, and boiling. Terracotta vessels can be used to serve right from the oven and straight to the dinner table.

Terracotta is ideal for baking purposes, since it distributes heat evenly, helping your baked goods turn out perfect. Traditionally, pizzas are cooked in brick ovens. Porous terracotta draws in moisture from the dough, producing a perfect crust.

THE FOLLOWING RULES MUST BE FOLLOWED WHEN USING TERRACOTTA COOKWARE:

Wash your terracotta cookware thoroughly with hot water before using it for the first time. Do not use soaps as they may block the delicate pores and affect the taste of the food cooked in terracotta pots.

Unglazed terracotta needs a good soak in water for at least 15 minutes before every use. This way the terracotta can absorb water, which will evaporate slowly from the pores during cooking.

Always place terracotta cookware filled with food in a cold oven, then set the temperature. This way you can avoid cracks and breakages in your vessels.

Cooking in terracotta requires a higher oven temperature than other types of cookware. Regular recipes can usually be converted for clay pot cooking by raising the cooking temperature by 100°F and adding a half hour to regular cooking time because the dish is placed into a cold oven and because the clay does not get hot as fast as metal cookware.