How to Fix Common Cast Iron Concerns



Rust

The Cause:

Rust forms when the cookware is exposed to moisture for extended periods of time and is not harmful in any way. If cast iron is left in the sink to soak, put in the dishwasher, or allowed to air dry, it will rust. It can also happen when you store your cookware in moisture-prone environments, such as a cabinet near a dishwasher, an open cabinet in a humid location, or stored outside.

The Fix:

Follow these steps to restore your cast iron skillet.

Step 1



Step 1

Scour

Scour the surface with warm, soapy water and a metal scouring pad. It's okay to use the scouring pad and soap since you are preparing to re-season the cookware. Rinse and hand dry thoroughly.

If you have a Lodge Rust Eraser, use it at this juncture to easily remove surface rust on cast iron cookware. It's made of rubber and silicon carbide—essentially sandpaper without the paper—bound together into a solid brick for easy handling. After you use the rust eraser, thoroughly remove all residual material, and continue with the restoration process detailed below.

Step 2



Step 2

Oil

Apply a very thin, even layer of cooking oil to the cookware (inside and out). If you use too much oil, your cookware may become sticky.

Step 3



Step 3

Bake

Place the cookware in the oven upside down on the top rack and place aluminum foil on the bottom rack to catch any excess oil that may drip off the cookware. Bake at 450-500 degrees F for one hour. Allow to cool and repeat as necessary to achieve the classic black patina.



Sticking

The Cause:

Occasionally food may stick to your cast iron cookware. This can happen for a variety of reasons, such as not using enough fat or oil when cooking, using cookware that isn't well seasoned, or when breaking in new cookware that hasn't built up additional layers of seasoning. To avoid stuck-on messes in the first place, check out the prevention tips and tricks in our how-to guide.

The Fix:

Prior to cooking, add about a teaspoon of oil to your skillet and heat it gradually on the stovetop or in the oven to help reduce sticking. After cooking, allow the cookware to cool, then use a pan scraper to remove stuck-on food, scrub with a nylon brush or nonscratch pad, hand dry, and add a generous layer of oil. Rub the oil onto the pan until it is evenly distributed.



Flaking

The Cause:

Occasionally, the seasoning on your pan may break down and leave black specks, especially if the cookware is not well-seasoned, but it is not harmful in any way.

The Fix:

To remove any loose flakes, lightly scour the cookware, then season it by rubbing the pan with a thin layer of oil, placing it in the oven upside down, and baking for one hour at 450-500 degrees F. Line the bottom rack of your oven with aluminum foil to catch any excess oil. As the seasoning builds up over time, the flaking with eventually be minimal.



Stuck-On Food

The Cause:

If you accidentally leave your cast iron cookware on any heat source for too long, food, marinades, and sauces can burn and get stuck to the surface.

The Fix:

Use a pan scraper to remove stuck-on food. If the problem persists, simmer a little water in the pan for 3-5 minutes, then use the scraper. Be sure to dry thoroughly and add a layer of oil afterwards. If this does not remove the burned-on food, follow our re-seasoning tips in the Rust section.



Black Residue

The Cause:

There can be residue from the seasoning that may come off your seasoned cookware. The residue is not harmful in any way and will decrease as the cookware is used over time. It can also appear when cooking liquids, boiling water, using soap on newer cookware, or cooking acidic and alkaline foods such as beans and tomatoes.

The Fix:

Continue to use and care for your cookware, and you will see a reduction in black residue as the seasoning improves.



Sticky Surface

The Cause:

If the seasoning in your pan is sticky, this is a sign of excess oil built up on the cookware.

The Fix:

To remedy stickiness, place the cookware upside down on the top rack of the oven and bake at 450-500 degrees F for one hour. Allow to cool and repeat if necessary.



Odors

The Cause:

When you cook fish or other pungent foods in cast iron or improperly clean your cookware before storing, you may notice lingering smells.

The Fix:

To eliminate the unwanted odor, simply bake your cast iron pan in the oven at 400 degrees F for 15 minutes. This easy, odor-eliminating method won't damage the seasoning on your cookware. A traditional method calls for you to sprinkle a layer of regular table salt on the cooking surface of your cookware, leave it on overnight, and rinse it off in the morning. This will also eliminate any lingering odors. If smells persist, you may need to scour and re-season your cookware