



DAILY Photo by Gary Cosby Jr.

Jim Bloom tosses chicken into a Dutch oven during preparation of Chicken Marcella.

Going Dutch

Scoutmaster is a gourmet cook in the great outdoors

By Patrice Stewart

DAILY Staff Writer

pstewart@decaturdaily.com · 340-2446

If you're ever hungry on a trek into the woods, just follow your nose to the wonderful aromas coming from Jim Bloom's Dutch ovens.

You will find far more than hot dogs and ham sandwiches at Bloom's campsite. He'll be the Scoutmaster deftly checking on the contents of seven Dutch ovens — often stacked three or four high — and keeping up with cooking times and temperatures, determined by the number of charcoals placed on top of and beneath each oven.

That's 10 to 12 coals on the bottom and 12 to 14 coals on top of a Dutch oven to achieve 350 degrees, but you need to take into consideration whether you are using a 12-, 14- or 16-inch Dutch oven, or another size.

Bloom recently whipped up several of his specialties as a cooking demonstration for an end-of-year Arrowhead District Boy Scout Leader Roundtable. He is Roundtable commissioner, as well as assistant Scoutmaster for Troop 132, as even his tie features a small Dutch oven with charcoals dangling down.

Bloom puts as much care into his Dutch-oven cooking as he does into his job as a senior design engineer at The Boeing Co. in Decatur. After those attending learned about his techniques, they got to devour his Chicken Marcella, Pasta e Fagioli, Enchilada Casserole, Hash Brown Casserole, Rosemary-Garlic Rolls, Peach-Pineapple Cobbler and Deep-dish Apple Pie — all prepared in less than two hours in the parking lot at Central Baptist Church.

"Every year I try something a little different," said Bloom. "This year I'm trying Pasta e Fagioli," which resembles a soup on the Olive Garden menu.

"Most anything you can cook in your kitchen oven at home, you can cook outside in a Dutch oven," said Bloom. He said Roundtable also serves as a social event for Scout leaders, "but some are experienced and some are brand-new.

"I'm trying to show them things they can make besides hot dogs when they're on a campout," said Bloom, who has been involved with Scouting for 35 years and lived in Decatur for 16 years.

"I like to cook, so it's fun," he said. With his experience, he can take almost any kind of recipe and adapt it for a Dutch oven. He knows how to make substitutions based on what

items are on hand, and he can mix ingredients while keeping one eye on red-hot charcoals. Dutch ovens make it easier to cook for a crowd than using a gas camp stove, he said.

Bloom distributed his booklets of Dutch oven tips and recipes, including the seasoning and care of the Dutch oven (he prefers to use olive oil for seasoning and greasing), how lining it with aluminum foil can make cleanup much easier, and how soaking in Coca-Cola can help remove rust. He prefers to use Kingsford Charcoal and says it should be kept dry in a plastic bucket with a lid that seals. He knows how to prevent burning with wire cooling racks or trivets in the bottom of the Dutch oven and has tips for rotating the oven for even cooking, tools needed, what size oven to use for which foods, and much more.

Other Scout leaders had stories to tell of how they like using the Dutch oven after learning from Bloom.

"We went camping a few weeks ago and it turned out to be one boy's birthday," said Brian Mitchell, leader of Troop 275 in Priceville. They remembered Bloom's cake techniques, located a mix and had a cake baking in a Dutch oven in no time. "The birthday cake turned out good, although the icing was kind of gooey," he said.

Bloom taught them to use soda such as Mountain Dew in their cakes, and Coca-Cola works well with chocolate cake mixes. "And you can throw together a cobbler in no time at all in a Dutch oven."

Bloom's sidekick and helper, Bob Harries, committee chairman for Troop 132, helped him with the cooking last week. "I remember living in Idaho as a kid and seeing these sheep herders bury a pot of mutton in a huge pit." He didn't realize it at the time, but he was watching Dutch-oven cooking.

The moms know there are benefits, too. "In Boy Scouts, my son has learned to eat a lot of different things, because there's nothing else to eat out in the woods, and this is good food, too," said Lisa Ramey.

Here are some of the recipes Bloom uses, many of which you can also prepare for your home oven.

Enchilada Casserole

Large bottle Pace Panache Sauce

1 pound sausage

1 to 2 pounds ground beef

1 bell pepper

1 large white onion

4 cloves garlic

1 package 12-inch tortillas

1 package shredded cheese

1 can sliced olives

Brown the sausage, ground beef, garlic, chopped onion and chopped bell pepper and drain. Line a 12-inch Dutch oven with foil; then pull foil out and place a trivet on the bottom of the Dutch oven. Replace foil on top of the trivet; this keeps the bottom of the casserole from burning.

Place a tortilla in the bottom and cover with a few spoonfuls each of Panache sauce, cooked meat mixture, olives and cheese. Then put in another tortilla and continue the layering process until the Dutch oven is full. Bake for 30 minutes or let heat thoroughly.

Chicken Marcella

4 chicken breasts

1/2 cup Marcella wine

6 ounces sliced mushrooms, fresh if possible

1/4 cup flour

1 14-ounce can chicken broth

1/2 teaspoon dried basil

3 tablespoons butter

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 cup onion

1 clove garlic, or to taste

Italian seasoning to taste

Noodles or linguine

In a 12-inch hot Dutch oven, add olive oil, butter, onions and garlic; brown. Cut chicken breasts into large pieces (or start with chicken-finger-size pieces). Season flour to taste; dredge chicken pieces and brown with onions and garlic.

Add mushrooms and wine, which will cook out, and simmer at low to medium heat for at least an hour; keep moist and add more chicken broth if needed.

Serve over noodles or linguine.

Pasta e Fagioli

1 pound ground beef

1 cup diced onion (1 small)

1 cup carrots, julienned

3 stalks celery, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 28-ounce can diced tomatoes

1 15-ounce can red kidney beans, with liquid

1 15-ounce can Great Northern bean, with liquid

1 15-ounce can Tomato sauce

1 12-ounce can V-8 juice

1 tablespoon white vinegar

1-1/2 teaspoons salt

1 teaspoon oregano

1 teaspoon basil

1/2 teaspoon pepper

1/2 teaspoon thyme

1/2 pound Ditali pasta

Brown the ground beef in a 12-inch Dutch oven over medium heat and drain most of the fat. Add onion, carrot, celery and garlic and sauté for 10 minutes. Add remaining ingredients, except pasta, and simmer for 1 hour if more liquid is needed. Add water or V-8 juice to bring mixture up to the soup consistency you want.

Add pasta and simmer until pasta is tender. Additional liquid may be needed for the pasta, if you cook the pasta in the soup. Hash Brown Casserole

2-pound package frozen hash brown potatoes

3/4 cup butter, divided

16 ounces sour cream

1 can cream of chicken soup

Minced onion, to taste

1/2 cup milk

2 cups grated cheese

Cornflakes, to cover

Mix hash browns with 1/4 cup melted butter and placed in a greased 12- or 14-inch Dutch oven.

In a bowl, mix sour cream, soup, onion and milk. Pour over the hash browns. Sprinkle cheese on top of the casserole. Top with cornflakes and pour 1/2 cup of melted butter over all. Bake at 350 degrees (10 to 12 coals on the bottom and 12 to 14 coals on top) for 1-1/4 hours.

Chicken and Rice

Chicken (family pack, 6 leg quarters)

1 bunch celery

1 large onion

4 cans chicken broth

2 cans biscuits

1 pound rice

Add chicken broth to Dutch oven. Boil chicken, chopped onion and celery in broth until chicken comes off bone. If possible, debone chicken. Do not drain. Add rice and cook until rice is done, using charcoal briquettes only on the top of the oven lid.

Add biscuits on top of the chicken and rice; cook until biscuits are brown.

Sausage Egg Casserole

8 slices bread

1-1/2 pounds sausage

6 eggs

2-1/4 cups milk

1 pound Cheddar cheese

1 can cream of mushroom soup

Brown sausage and drain. Put meat in the lid of Dutch oven. Cut bread into squares and place in bottom of oven. Cover the bread with the sausage. Beat eggs, blend in 2 cups of milk and pour over bread and sausage. Grate cheese and place over meat, eggs and bread.

Place approximately 8 to 10 bricks of charcoal on bottom and top of oven and cook approximately 1-1/2 hours. About a half-hour before it is done, mix cream of mushroom soup and remaining milk and pour over the mixture; let cook until soup has thickened. Serves 4 to 6, depending on how hungry you are.

Forty-mile Stew

2 quarts sliced potatoes

1 quart diced carrots

1-1/2 cups chopped onions

1-1/2 pounds grated sharp cheese

1-1/2 pounds hamburger

1-1/2 pounds link sausage, cut into 4 pieces each

Prepare ahead the sliced potatoes (put into cold water until ready to use) and the diced carrots and chopped onions. Cook link sausage ahead and cut it up.

Cook hamburger meat in hot 12- or 14-inch Dutch oven until brown. Then add the lightly drained potatoes, carrots, onions, salt and pepper. Mix and put the lid on until vegetables are done. Then add the sausage and grated cheese; do not stir. Return the lid until sausage is heated and cheese is melted. Use 15 charcoals under the oven and 10 on top.

Pot Roast

7- to 10-pound roast

2 Vidalia onions

2 bottles Catalina salad dressing

Carrots and potatoes

Peel and cut the onions in half. Place them cut side down in the bottom of the Dutch oven. Place the roast on top and cover with the two bottles of Catalina dressing. Fill the bottles 3/4 full with water and pour over roast. Cover Dutch oven and simmer over campfire for 2 to 4 hours.

Peel and cut carrots and potatoes and place in with roast. Cook for another hour.

Rosemary-garlic Rolls

Frozen roll dough

Olive oil

Rosemary-garlic or other seasonings

Follow the directions on the label of the frozen dough.

Line a Dutch oven with foil and use a trivet in the bottom. Use olive oil or spray on foil. Add frozen dough as rolls (or loaf) on foil. Sprinkle with olive oil and seasonings such as rosemary-garlic.

Let dough rise to desired height. To decrease the time, a few charcoals can be added on top and bottom of the oven. After the dough has risen, sprinkle a little more rosemary-garlic and bake per label instruction.

Pineapple Upside Down Cake

1/2 stick butter or margarine

1/2 to 3/4 cup brown sugar 1 20-ounce can pineapple slices (9 slices, save juice)

9 Maraschino cherry halves

1/2 cup pecan halves

1 cup chopped pecans

1 yellow or pineapple cake mix

3 eggs

1/3 cup mayonnaise

1/2 to 1 cup Mountain Dew or 7-Up

Melt the butter in the bottom of a 12-inch, foil-lined Dutch oven. Sprinkle brown sugar evenly over the butter. Place pineapple rings over the mixture and place a cherry half inside each pineapple ring. Place pecan halves among the pineapple rings.

Pour the pineapple juice (and cherry juice if desired) into a measuring cup and add enough Mountain Dew or 7-Up to make 1-1/4 cup.

In a large bowl, combine the cake mix, mayonnaise, eggs, pineapple juice, soda and chopped pecans. Stir for 3 minutes. Carefully spoon the mix evenly over the pineapple rings.

Bake at 350 degrees (10 to 12 coals on the bottom and 12 to 14 coals on top) for 30 to 45 minutes or until cake tests done. While still hot, turn cake out onto the lid or a board covered with foil.

Pineapple-Peach Cobbler

1 large can sliced peaches

1 can crushed pineapple

1 yellow cake mix

3 eggs

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1 cup Mountain Dew

1/2 cup brown sugar

Chopped pecans (optional)

Pour peaches and pineapple in bottom of 12-inch Dutch oven. Sprinkle brown sugar on fruit (pecans could also be added).

Mix cake batter per cake mix instruction (you may incorporate the eggs, mayonnaise and Mountain Dew) and pour batter evenly over fruit. Bake according to mix instructions.