

Clay Pot Cooking by Cyndi Allison

Clay pot cooking is back in style. Cooking in a clay pot is both healthy and also very tasty, so a clay pot is a good piece to add to your kitchen collection.

If you've ever been to a museum or to an Indian village, then you've likely seen pots or pieces of pots made of clay. The new clay pots look quite a bit like the old ones and work the same way. You're basically steaming the food with water that is absorbed by the clay pot and then released during the cooking process.

How to Use a Clay Cooking Pot



Before using the clay pot, you must soak the top and bottom in cold water. The time suggested varies, but I usually soak for at least ½ hour. The clay absorbs the water. That releases during cooking, so you don't have to add liquid to most dishes. Foods are moist and most do have liquid in the bottom that comes from the food item and the pre-soaking absorbed by the clay. This is healthier than having to use oil in foods, and you get the same effect with clay but without the oil taste.

With a clay pot, you do not preheat the oven. You put the pot in the cold oven and then set the temperature. Putting the pot in a hot oven could crack the pot, so do not preheat before cooking.

Clay cooking is a rather slow process. Most foods need to cook about an hour more than if cooked in another type pan. As a rule, you also set the oven temperature higher. For example, I cook beef roast for 3 hours at 400 degrees.

Food in a Clay Pot is Very Flavorful

The food cooking in natural juices and retaining vitamins and minerals is a big plus with clay pot cooking, but the taste is what makes this cooking method special. The only comparison I might make is that clay pot cooked food tastes kind of like food cooked when camping and using a Dutch Oven. It's not the same, but that is the closest I can come to describing clay pot food. Food cooked in a clay pot is really tender, juicy, and has that little extra flavor that can't be duplicated with other pans.

Cleaning a Clay Pot

To clean the clay pot, just use a synthetic scratch pad and water. Even stuck on foods come right off with a little rubbing. Do not use soap, because that can clog up the pores.

Storage of a Clay Cooking Pot

When storing the pot, leave the pot lid cocked a bit. If you close up the pot, then it can mold if you have any moisture or small food particles inside.

As you use the clay pot, it darkens (kind of like cast iron). A new one is brightish orange. A used one is kind of earth colored.

Where are the Clay Pot Recipes?

The main down side to clay pot cooking currently is that there are not many cookbooks out there with recipes. If you search online, you will find a few cookbooks and also some internet sites with recipes. Overall, the selection is still limited but growing with time.

If you do much cooking, then you can adjust your recipes and try the clay pot. Some easy dishes are the beef roast I mentioned as well as chicken and potatoes. With chicken, just put the meat in and add seasonings. Cook for a couple of hours. For potatoes, slice them and add onions and green peppers if you like peppers. Add a couple of teaspoons of water with the potatoes. They come out roasted and with crispy skins if cooked a couple of hours at 400 degrees.

Thumbs Up to Clay Pots

Clay pot dishes have been a real hit at my house. I like that I can cook without all the grease so common in the south. The food turns out just as good as dishes deep fried and those cooked with bacon grease. This is a real plus for health and the waistline. I enjoyed learning about old style cooking repackaged for a new generation, and it has been fun to experiment with the pot. I have not had any dishes turn out awful though the beef, chicken, and potatoes are the family favorites.

Clay Pot Potatoes

6-8 potatoes

1 onion

2 tsp. salt

2 tsp. pepper

1 cup Parmesan Cheese (the hard grated type in the shake bottle – not the soft Parmesan)



Soak the clay pot for 20 minutes or more. Remove from water. Cut potatoes up in chunks. It's fine to leave the peelings on. As you load the potatoes in the clay pot, sprinkle some salt, pepper, and Parmesan Cheese on by layers, so all the potatoes will be seasoned lightly. You can layer the onion or add it on top at the end for taste. Put the clay pot in the oven and then turn the oven to 400 degrees F. Let the potatoes roast for an hour and a half.