

Haybox Cookery

Find out all about hayboxes – simple, insulated boxes used for slow cooking. Save energy and discover some tasty new recipes!

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The advantages of haybox cookery

There are a number of types of foods that cook well in a haybox, including soups, stews, sauces, stewed fruits, milk puddings, brown rice and stock. The box may also be used to keep pans or dishes of food warm, to make yoghurt, or to keep food cold for short periods.

Besides saving fuel and money, it costs little or nothing to make, it cooks food well, and it can't overcook or burn food.

The design has proved especially valuable in places such as rural South Africa where firewood is scarce, and the search for it can take hours each day. The women frequently put the dinner on before they go to work and, upon their return, it is ready to eat.

There are commercially produced hayboxes on the market, but they are expensive. In less than half an hour you could make one yourself using materials which cost little or nothing, and which are easy to obtain by examining the diagram and following these directions.

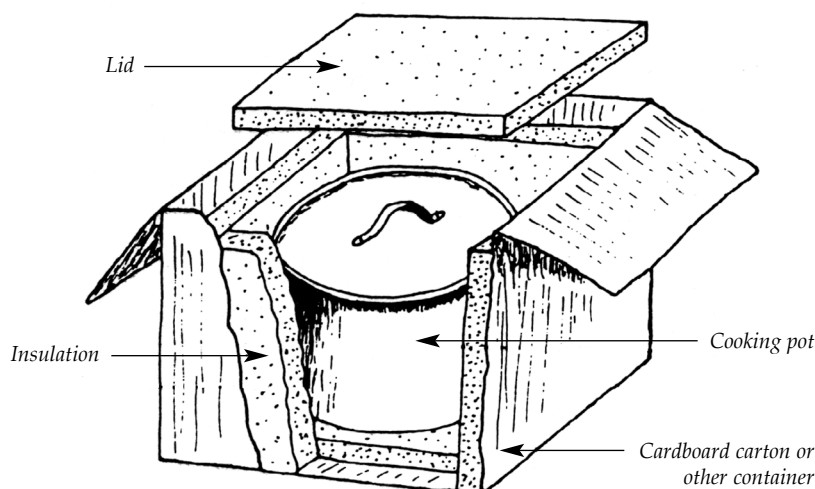
Materials

Traditionally, hay was used as the insulating material as it was easily available and cheap, but it has the disadvantage that it needs to be renewed fairly frequently and is messy. It is now also expensive and difficult for town-wellers to obtain, so different insulating materials have become more common. Polystyrene or crumpled newspaper are suitable alternatives.

The other requirement is a cooking pot with two small handles at the top (for easy removal from the box) and a well fitting lid. Ideally the haybox should be made to fit a particular pan – the less space there is around the pan, the less heat will be lost.

How to use a haybox

Bring the contents of the pan to the boil and put on the lid. Open the box and put the pan inside. Quickly cover the lid of the box to prevent heat from escaping. Cooking will continue at a little below simmering point. If the pan is removed from the box at any point during cooking for any reason, such as to stir the contents, bring it to the boil again before replacing it. It is also advisable to boil meat dishes for a couple of minutes before serving them. Cooking times are likely to be about half as long again as simmering on the stove but it is best to experiment for yourself.



Approximate times: stews, 3-5 hours; lentils, 1-3 hours; milk puddings, 1 hour. Important note: All beans, especially red beans, should be boiled on a stove for at least 20 minutes prior to placing in haybox to ensure that the toxic antitrypsins are destroyed.

Recommended Reading

Chop It, Cook It, Eat It £1.75
CAT chefs, illus. by John Urry, A5, 48pp.

A selection of recipes from our celebrated wholefood café.

Wholewheat Baking

£1.90
Steve Jacobs, illus. Lucy Case, A5, 36pp.

Bread, cake and pudding recipes from one of our top cooks.

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Sample Recipes

Potato and Onion Soup

2 medium onions, sliced
1oz. butter or margarine
1 pint of water or stock
1lb. peeled, sliced potatoes
1 bayleaf
1 pint of milk
Salt, pepper & nutmeg
Melt butter in pan, add vegetables, cover, and stew slowly for about 5 minutes until softening. Add bayleaf, milk and stock, bring to the boil. Simmer for 2 or 3 minutes, cover and put quickly into the haybox. Leave for about 45 minutes. When cooked, remove bayleaf, put

through a sieve, Mouli or liquidiser. Season with salt, pepper and a grating of nutmeg

Sweet and Sour Cabbage

1 oz. butter
½lb. white cabbage, shredded
1 apple, peeled, cored & chopped
2 tsp. brown sugar
1 clove
1tbs. wine vinegar
Salt & Pepper
Melt butter in pan. Add all other ingredients, stir over a low gas for about 3 minutes. Transfer to haybox. Leave for about 45 minutes.