Handling and Curing the Portuguese Pizza Oven.

Many thanks for your purchase of a Portuguese pizza oven, we hope it will become an asset to your outdoor cooking!

Whether your oven is made from bricks or clay there are a few points to consider before you start using it:

1. Handling the oven.

The oven arrives in a freight truck. If the driver is using a tailgate / liftgate to unload the oven from the truck onto the ground please do not stand on, under, or near the liftgate, let the driver handle it.

The oven comes in a wooden crate. To remove the oven from the crate please cut the walls of the crate with a regular handsaw and / or break with a hammer. Once the walls and top of the crate are removed the oven is ready to be lifted. The oven can be lifted using the 4 lifting eyes located on the 4 corners of the base of the oven. You can connect straps or chains to these eyes and lift the oven with an engine hoist, forklift, skid steer, gantry crane, bobcat etc. Please make sure to use all 4 eyes, the oven cannot be lifted by just 2 or 3! The weight must be equally distributed among the corners: all 4 straps / chains must be tight! If you are using chains wrap the oven in a blanket to avoid scratching the dome. Of course please make sure to use only equipment rated for sufficient weight including hooks, shackles, chains, straps, hoists, etc. When the oven is being lifted, lowered down, or is just hanging up in the air do not stand on, under, or near it! Consult applicable local regulation for overhead lifting.

1. Curing the oven.

Like all brick and clay ovens your oven has to be cured. The first step is to get a 7 day candle and leave it burning in the oven for a few days. Close the door and leave the chimney open. Next step is to run a series of very small but gradually increasing fires in the oven. Each fire should take 3-4 hours. The first fire should be very low, at just 150-250F. The next one 350-500F and the final fire at 700F. Please use smaller pieces of wood when curing the oven – ideal are 3-4” chunks r split logs. Do not use full size fireplace logs as they are too big. Curing the oven usually takes a few days and is meant to drive away as much moisture as possible from the dome of the oven. Once the oven is cured it’s ready to be used! Some degree of cracking is normal in all brick and clay ovens. The brick oven (but not the clay oven) comes with the Ultrafire kit to patch possible cracks, please see our other download on how to use it, as well as the video.

1. Firing the oven.

When using the oven an important thing to remember is to keep the fires slow and gradual. A Portuguese oven needs 90 min. to reach pizza cooking temperature. The best wood to burn in the oven is seasoned hardwood such as maple, cherry, oak. Never burn liquids or gas in your oven, incl. firestarter fluid! Please keep in mind that the temperature gauge of the oven is in Celsius, not Fahrenheit, 300-400C is a good T for cooking pizza and all other dishes are cooked at lower T. Do not overfire!

1. Covering the oven.

The Portuguese oven should always be protected from the elements! It should not be exposed to any rain or snow. This can be achieved with a simple waterproof BBQ cover or even tarp, as long as it's waterproof.