

Cast iron: fact or fiction?

FICTION

1. Lard and bacon are the best seasoning oils

Bacon fat and lard are very high in saturated fats, which are much less reactive than unsaturated fats. Oils high in unsaturated fats—like flaxseed or vegetable oils—are more reactive, meaning they can oxidize and form the polymerized chains necessary for properly seasoning a cast-iron pan. A proper seasoning fills in the tiny crevices and pores in the surface of your cast-iron pan with a hydrophobic, plastic-like layer. This layer prevents water-soluble proteins (eggs, meat and cheese) from sticking to the pan.

2. Never use soaps on your cast iron

A proper seasoning is very durable, and cannot be harmed by dish soaps. Lye-based cleaners are the only thing that will damage the seasoning, because they can dissolve the oil polymer.

FACT

3. Always dry your pan immediately after cleaning

Iron is prone to rust, so give your pan a dry with a dish towel, or pop it in the oven or on the stovetop to heat it (and dry it faster).

4. Coat your pan in oil when done cleaning

Oil will help keep any moisture in the air from affecting the iron. It also helps create the newest layer of seasoning when you next cook with the pan. A good seasoning grows over time—and many uses—in microscopic layers of polymerization. These thin layers adhere well to the pan, whereas thick layers can flake off.

* Learn how to properly season a cast-iron pan

Sources:

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