



Forno Bravo

Authentic Italian Wood-Fired Ovens

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WOOD FIRED COOKING

Your brick oven is capable of an almost endless variety of cooking styles. With almost all types of cooking, you should bring your oven fully up to heat, then prepare it for the type of cooking you want to do by moving the fire and coals, and letting the oven temperature reach the range where you will be cooking. How long you fire your oven depends on how much cooking you will be doing, and how long you want your oven to hold its heat. Remember that you can only take out heat from the oven that you put in. If you are going to be cooking a lot of pizza for a large party, or baking lots of bread or a large roast, fire your oven longer. If you are making pizza for the family for a mid-week meal, you can fire your oven for a shorter time -- typically only until the dome goes white.

The main cooking styles are:

Fire-in-the-oven Cooking

Fire-in-the-oven cooking (650°F and up) is used for baking pizza, pizza-like flatbreads and certain types of appetizers, all of which cook in a couple of minutes. Your Forno Bravo Pizza Oven can be pizza-ready in about 45 minutes, using 7-8 sticks of wood. The goal with this type of cooking is to completely fill the floor and dome with heat, build up a large sized bed of coals and maintain a large fire where the flame reaches to top of the dome. There are two ways to know that an oven is ready to cook pizza. First, when the oven dome itself has gone clear, and there is no visible black soot. At this point, you should move the fire to one side, while continuing to maintain a large fire going with the flame reaching the middle of the oven. Alternatively, if you are using an infrared thermometer, the floor should read approximately 650°F-700°F. Pizzas are baked right on the floor next to the fire. Leave the oven completely open, and add one piece of wood every 15-20 minutes to maintain a large flame.

Roasting (at higher heat than Baking)

Roasting (600°F-450°F) is used for dishes where you want to sear meats, or brown vegetables and casseroles before either covering them with a lid, or with liquids, and for dishes that will cook completely before the outside either burns or becomes too brown. Roasting temperature range between 600°F - 450°F, or lower than high heat fire-in-the-oven pizza cooking, and higher than traditional baking. In order to roast, first bring you oven up to pizza temperature and then allow it to drop in temperature and the fire to burn down, but not out. Push the coals to one side. The combination of a fully fired oven combined with a low fire enables you to sear and brown dishes, and then allow the oven to slowly drop in temperature for longer cooking. There should be no visible black on the dome, a medium sized bed of coals and a small flame of 2"-4" high. The door may be left off for shorter roasting times (under one hour) or positioned inside the arch opening to help regulate the heat for hours of roasting. Add small pieces of wood as needed to maintain temperature. You can move your pans around inside the oven, and remember that the oven will be hotter on the side with the fire and/or coals, so you may have to rotate your pans.

Baking (at conventional oven temperatures)

Baking (500°F and down) is used for baking bread, desserts, smaller roast meats, beans and legumes, and pasta dishes at conventional oven temperatures. After fully firing your oven, carefully rake out the hot coals and brush out the oven. If you wish, you can swab the deck with a damp, not wet, towel. Your oven can now cook gently and consistently with the heat retained in the oven dome and floor, as the temperature falls. Using this type of cooking, you can bake either one fully load batch of bread, or multiple bathes of different types of bread, but with smaller quantities. Read our Creating Steam page for more information on how to bake better bread. Close the door tightly against the oven opening to hold in heat and steam.

Read our Retained Heat Cooking page for more information on this type of cooking, including temperature recommendations for different dishes.

Grilling

Your brick oven makes a great grill. By raking a layer of hot coals across the cooking floor at the front of your oven, and sliding a free standing cast iron grill into the oven, you can enjoy grilling that sets seared grill marks, and seals in moisture for food that is crisp and not dried out. With heat from the grill itself, from the coals and radiating from oven dome above, the brick oven is a great BBQ.

Also, try experimenting with different pot and pans. A grill pan pre-heated in your oven gives your food nice sear marks, and a terracotta pan and steel pan give roast potatoes a different texture and flavor.

Salute,
Forno Bravo