

# THE WOODWORKER

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS:—

	PAGE
Double Rover Garden Seat Cover 2	
Hay Box Cookers ..	145
The Spokeshave—How to Use ..	147
Lady's Work Table ..	150

	PAGE
Portable Fowl House ..	152
Poultry Fencing ..	154
Cottage Bookshelf Cabinette ..	158
Renovating Worm-eaten Furniture ..	161

	PAGE
Wood Carving ..	162
Garden Fence and Gate ..	164
The Question Box ..	166
Jardiniere for Bay Window ..	168
Light Lawn Tea Table Cover 3	

## HAY BOX COOKERS

### HOW TO MAKE AND USE THEM

IN these days of necessary economy, in how many households is the Hay Box—the fireless cooker—used? It is curious that, when you introduce the hay box to people, their first impulse is to smile, quite forgetting that there is a scientific explanation why it is a good cook. Hay is almost the best available non-conductor of heat. Thus, when food at boiling point is put into the hay box and well packed, the heat escapes so gently that the food goes on cooking in the very best way—slowly.

a sugar case—and line it with seven or eight thicknesses of newspaper to keep out all draughts. A useful size, which will allow of two divisions, is about 22 ins. by 15 ins., and 15 ins. or 16 ins. deep. A box for only one stew pan will do at about 14 ins. cube. The size depends on the cooking vessel used. At the bottom of the box there should be an allowance of 6 ins. for hay, and a minimum of 3 ins. of hay at each side. Above the pan it is necessary to allow 4 ins. for a cushion filled with hay.

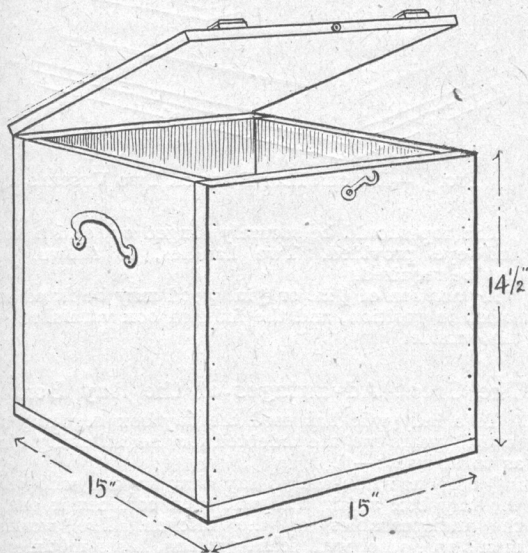


FIG. 1.—SMALL HAY BOX.

The hay box saves money, time and temper: *money*, because a fire may be dispensed with and the gas bill is reduced by one-half; *time*, because neither stirring nor attention is required after the food has been put in the box; *temper*, because the food is never boiled away or burnt.

A rough and ready hay box can be prepared at a cost of a shilling or less. Procure a wood box—say

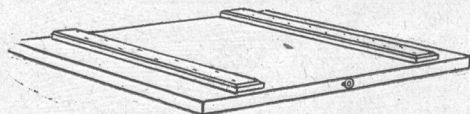


FIG. 2.—LID, SHOWING BATTENS.

About sixpenny worth of hay will fill the larger sized box. This should be packed as tightly as possible. Cushions to place above the stewing pan can be made of linen. These are tightly stuffed with hay, and should be of a size to fit the divisions

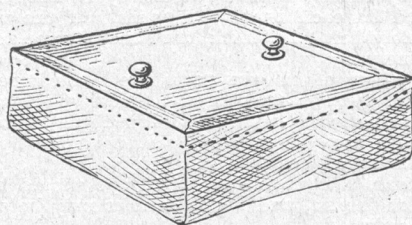


FIG. 3.—THE HAY CUSHION.

closely. Any ordinary saucepan can be used, but as beginners find the handles in the way, it is better to commence with either aluminium pans with a small handle on either side (aluminium holds the heat well) or enamel cans with a handle over the top. What is perhaps as good is an ordinary brown stewing jar. These can be bought for a few pence, are cleanly, and can be placed over a low gas flame.

The way a hay box cooker is used is obvious. The





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to be digestible it needs to be kept at boiling point and not allowed to go off for several hours. Others say, "Will it cook meat?" To this I say, Yes, but you must give it a good start. For instance, a stew put on the gas and cooked very gently for about forty-five minutes, and then put into the hay box for about three hours, will be found to be perfectly cooked, thus saving a good deal of gas.

A good rule for beginners with all kinds of meat, such as bacon, boiled beef, stews, boiled mutton, etc., is to calculate how long they would cook it in the ordinary way and then do it half that time on the gas or fire; then pack it into the hay and allow extra time, because it is in the box and cooking slowly. Bacon may well be left in the box all night. As you get more used to cooking with the box you will find you will be able to cook many things with one-third of the time only on the gas; but, to prevent disappointment, it is well, in the case of all meats, to allow half time on the gas until you get confidence.

Fish is very easy to boil in the hay box. A piece of salmon or cod or hake, weighing about 2 lbs., boiled gently for ten minutes and put in the box, can stay there for two or three hours and take no harm, or can be taken out after two hours perfectly done. I have found the minimum time for cooking is two hours, while many things are improved by a much longer time. The great advantage is that nothing spoils, and it is

most convenient to be able to put various things in one or more boxes by 10 o'clock in the morning, go on with the day's work, and forget all about them until they are wanted, either for the mid-day or evening meal.

Many people ask: "Does the hay need renewing?" No, it keeps perfectly fresh and sweet, but as time goes on it breaks up and sinks, so that from time to time it can, with great advantage, have a little more added to it.

Bread tins discoloured by a gas oven or burnt, if put into a boiler with plenty of soda water, brought to the boil, put quickly into the hay box and left all night, will come out next morning as good as new.

One last word: Remember, we have no right to expect the hay box to do our cooking at such a small cost if we do not help it to this extent, namely, that we are careful to see that all foods are put in at boiling point."

We have before us a capital little booklet on this economical fireless cooker, entitled: "The Hay Box and Its Uses," by A. Hawkins. This includes valuable recipes on the cooking of meats, vegetables, fruit, etc., and should be in the hands of every housewife who wishes to give the hay box a trial. By arrangement with the publisher (J. W. Butcher, 2 and 3, Ludgate Circus Buildings, London, E.C.), a copy of this interesting booklet will be sent post free for 3d. to any applicant who mentions that he is a reader of THE WOODWORKER. 851

## HOW TO USE AND SHARPEN THE SPOKESHAVE TOOL MANIPULATION.—No. 8

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THE spokeshave, as its name suggests, is a tool of some antiquity, and its evolution and development appear to have been on the following lines. The earliest tool of similar principle was the knife, from which at a later period was developed the double handed knife, commonly known to the carpenter as the draw knife. With the above tools it was impossible to remove a thin and uniform shaving which would follow the contour of the ever varying shapes so common to the wheelwright, but with the introduction of the plane such an operation could easily be carried out upon a comparatively straight surface. This, no doubt, gave to some ingenious workman the idea of combining the draw knife with the body of a very small plane, and the result was the spokeshave.

To use the spokeshave it should be held lightly, but firmly, in the hands, as shown at Fig. 1. The force applied by each arm must be evenly balanced, and the proper inclination of the tool and the pressure upon it require considerable practice if the tool is to work properly. A know-

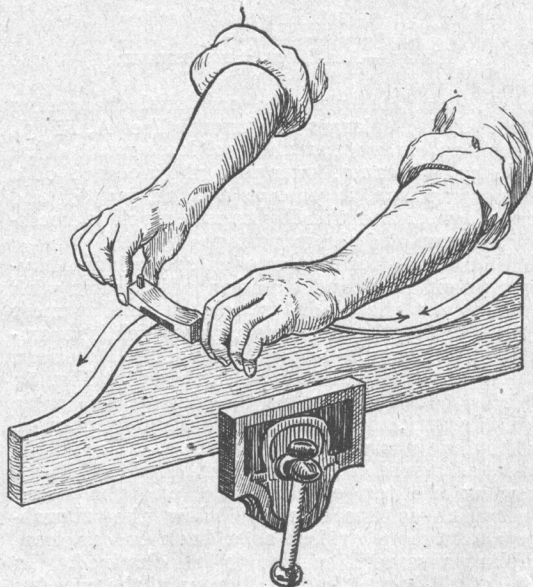


FIG. 1.—USING THE SPOKESHAVE WITH THE GRAIN