THE WOODWORKER

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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.

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FIG. I.—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

a sugar case—and line it with seven or eight thick nesses 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.

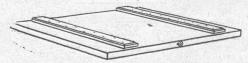


FIG. 2.—LID, SHOWING BATTENS.

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

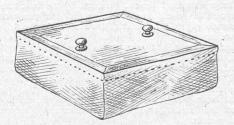


FIG. 3.—THE HAY CUSHION.

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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stew pan, with the food, is brought to the boil over a gas ring (or on a fire), and is then placed in the box. It rests on the hay; hay is all around it, and the hay cushion is put above, being held down either with a weight or with the lid of the box. The water remains practically at boiling point for many hours, and in this way food may be cooked without requiring the usual constant attention. In many cases it may be cooked overnight.

Making a Hay Box.

But if a serviceable and lasting hay box is wanted, it is well to make a thoroughly good one, and even this can be done at a trifling cost. Two boxes may be described, a small one for a single saucepan, and a larger one for two vessels.

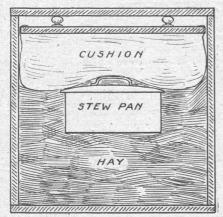


Fig. 4.—Sectional View, Showing Pan in Position.

SMALL Box.—For a small box an outside measurement of 15 ins. by 15 ins. and 15 ins. high will do. Allowing wood to finish \(\frac{1}{2}\) in. thick, the sides will be 15 ins. by 14 ins., the ends, 14 ins. by 14 ins., the bottom and lid each 15 ins. by 15 ins. If the wood is (preferably) left \(\frac{1}{2}\) in. thick, the sizes may be adjusted accordingly.

The edges of all six parts are planed perfectly true, and the box screwed or nailed together as indicated in the sketch (Fig. 1). The lid (Fig. 2) is strengthened with two battens (14½ ins. by 2 ins. by ½ in., with chamfered edges) and is hinged with a pair of 2 ins. brass butts. A catch and eye should be provided for the lid, and metal handles may be screwed to the ends.

This completes the cooker except for the hay cushion (Fig. 3). The wood top for this should be 14 ins, by 14 ins, bare (so as to fit inside the box), and ½ in. thick. A square linen bag, about 4 ins. deep, is made, tightly stuffed with hay, and nailed to the upper face of the wood top, as indicated at Fig. 3. A couple of small wood knobs may be fitted as shown to serve for lifting.

The sectional view, Fig. 4, shows how the saucepan is bedded in the hay for cooking.

Double Box.—For a hay box, with partition, to hold two saucepans, the size (as indicated in Fig. 5),

may be 22 ins. long, 15 ins. wide, and 16 ins. deep over the lid.

The two sides are framed up with wood 2 ins. wide by $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick, lap-jointed and nailed at the corners, as in the inset detail a. Allowing for a $\frac{3}{4}$ in. bottom, the lengths of the framing pieces will be: Top and bottom rails, 22 ins.; end stiles, $14\frac{1}{2}$ ins. The frame is then boarded over on the inside with a 22 ins. by $14\frac{1}{2}$ ins. piece of $\frac{1}{4}$ in. three-ply.

The ends $(14\frac{1}{2}$ ins. high by 13 ins. wide) may be

The ends $(14\frac{1}{2})$ ins. high by 13 ins. wide) may be framed up in the same way, or may be of solid $\frac{3}{4}$ in. wood, the front and back being nailed to them.

The lid (22 ins. by 15 ins.) is framed up like the sides, with the three-ply board on the inside face. The bottom, of $\frac{3}{4}$ in. tongued and grooved boards, may be nailed to the sides and ends.

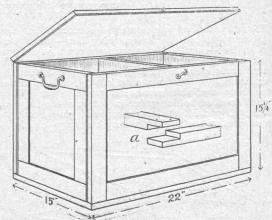


FIG. 5.—LARGER HAY BOX FOR TWO VESSELS.

The top should be securely hinged on, and a hook and eye provided. Two handles, as shown, will also be required.

A partition of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. or $\frac{3}{4}$ in. wood may be fitted and nailed in position, and the finished box varnished on the outside.

The Great Advantages of the Hay Box.

To a lady who has used the hay box regularly for several years we are indebted for the following hints as to its uses:—

"I do not hesitate to say that anyone who gives the hay box a fair trial will soon consider it one of the indispensables of the kitchen. The working man's wife who, with scanty means, has sometimes to go out for a day's hard work, will find it a great boon. A tasty stew, partly cooked, can be put in the box early in the morning, where it will go on cooking, and be well done and hot when the men return from work.

be well done and hot when the men return from work.

I have used a hay box for five years (almost every day) and have never spoiled anything. I have cooked in this way chicken, bacon, boiled beef, fish, vegetables, grains of all kinds, and fruits of all kinds. For boiling bacon the very best result can be obtained. Some will say, "Will it cook a suet pudding?" To that I should certainly say, No! because for a sue; pudding

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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 3½d.to any applicant who mentions that he is a reader of The Woodworker.

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

The previous articles of this series appeared in the 1915 Volume, price 3/6 (postage 5d. extra), and in the January, February, March, and May, 1916, numbers (3d. each), from the Publishers, EVANS BROS., LTD., Montague House, Russell Square, London, W.C.

HE 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,

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-

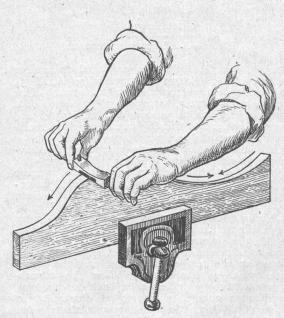


Fig. 1 .- Using the Spokeshave with the Grain