

Off-Grid Cooking Options

For when there is no electricity/gas to your home, or when you need to live outdoors, the following are some of the many options for cooking without power:

When there is Sun:

- **Sun Oven** – there are a variety of solar ovens from homemade versions to professional versions both box and tube style. They are size-limited and take a little longer to cook food, but they are very effective when the sun is shining reaching 300° to 350° F (with a good unit). Must use dark cookware. A good quality oven to purchase is the All-American Sun Oven for \$449.00 at sunoven.com/products (an increase of about \$60 since 2021). Another quality sun oven is the Gosun Fusion Hybrid for about \$499.00. There are also Youtube videos showing how to make your own sun oven.
- **Parabolic Cooker** – used extensively in third-world countries where available firewood has been exhausted and other fuel sources are unavailable. Although fairly simple and easy to use, they are large and bulky and do take up space. Can only cook one thing at a time and the sun must be shining. They can be purchased online from eBay or Walmart for as low as \$159.00. Many of the parabolic cookers ship from China which can take months, so I would recommend trying to find a non-China source.

When it is Dark or Overcast:

- **Jetboil** – can boil up to 2 cups of water in 90 seconds using a butane cannister. Perfect for hydrating and cooking foods like freeze-dried meals (i.e. Mountain House). Different sizes of Jetboil stove systems can be purchased at jetboil.com for between \$119.95 and \$129.95. Fuel cannisters come in three different sizes and can be purchased at REI for as low as \$4.95 each (which equates to less than \$0.10 per use).
- **Propane Stove** – propane stoves come in both portable versions (i.e. Coleman portable stove) camp stove versions. Right now, you can purchase a Coleman Powerhouse Dual Fuel 2-Burner portable stove for \$189.99 (currently at Sportsmans) or a Camp Chef Explorer 2-Burner Camp Stove for \$149.99 (at Cabela's). Propane is typically purchased in 20 lb tanks or 16 oz cannisters. The tanks can be purchased at places like Home Depot, Lowes and Walmart, and can be filled at lots of locations. We fill our tanks at the U-Haul store on the corner of Houston and Gilbert Rd. For the 16 oz cannisters we found a sale at Fry's for about \$3.50 a cannister. The challenge with propane is that it is a limited resource and if you are unable to replenish, the equipment is useless.
- **Rocket Stove** - A rocket stove is an efficient and hot burning stove using small-diameter wood fuel (i.e. twigs). Fuel is burned in a simple combustion chamber containing an insulated vertical chimney, which ensures almost complete combustion prior to the flames reaching the cooking surface. Rocket stoves use 18 to 35 percent less fuel compared to traditional stoves. You can buy them on the internet (there is a decent quality unit on Amazon for \$58.32) or you can make your own using bricks (see Youtube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onMbSLuC7Oc>) at a cost of about \$15. Different grates can be used, but we found a stove burner grate online for \$20.
- **Volcano Grill** – Volcano grills are efficient cooking chambers that funnel all of the heat up to the cooking surface instead of outward. They have the ability to use three different fuel sources (propane, wood, or charcoal briquettes) and can function as a grill, dutch oven, frying pan, griddle, oven or wok. An entire meal can be cooked with just 15 briquettes. They are collapsible and portable. They can be purchased from volcanogrills.com for as low as \$189.99. Buying and storing charcoal briquettes is also easy...we purchased some 32 gallon heavy duty Brute garbage cans with

lids from Home Depot (\$38 each) and several bags of Kingsford briquettes (2-20lb bags for \$20) which we poured into the cans. They are watertight, can be stored outside, and are reasonably maneuverable. Five bags of charcoal fit into a can.

- **Dutch Oven Cooking** – Cast iron cooking is an art and takes some practice, but it can be easy and efficient. Dutch ovens come in different styles and sizes (2qt, 4qt, 5qt, 6qt, 8qt and 10qt). They are also sometimes referred to by their diameter. They also come in 3.5" and 5" depths. We found the Lodge brand to be one of the best in quality, although slightly more expensive. We were advised to buy a few different sized dutch ovens in order to prepare meals for different sized groups. They can be used over open fire, in coals, or using charcoal briquettes. We recommend buying a book on dutch oven cooking to learn techniques including care and maintenance...as well as recipe ideas. Dutch ovens can be used over an open fire, with the Volcano Grill, Rocket Stove, Parabolic Cooker and a Propane Stove (all mentioned above).
- **BioLite CampStove** – turns fire using only twigs into a smokeless cooking stove and provides electricity to charge your gear. The CampStove 2+ can be purchased for \$149.95 at bioliteenergy.com.

Another option for cooking without power is to purchase a solar generator and develop a charge during daylight and then plug in an electric plate or microwave any time during the day. Although a solar generator is not as powerful as a standard gas generator, they have plenty of power to run most electronics. Most importantly they have a renewable power source and can be used for a variety of electrical charging needs (i.e. phones, computers, tools, fans, heaters, etc...) – and they are completely silent. Solar generators cost between \$1,800 to \$3,000 with additional costs for various accessories. We purchased a Patriot solar generator for \$2,400. A good comparison of solar generators can be found at <https://poweredportablesolar.com/titan-solar-generator-the-best-of-its-kind-period/#&qid=1&pid=1>. Solar generators are very popular right now so plan on waiting 3-6 months for shipping.

- **Electric Plate** – with a solar generator, an electric plate is a good option for cooking at any time of the day. Currently you can purchase a Cuisinart Cast Iron Double Burner electric plate online for \$79.99 from Kohl's.

Another good reference for ideas on how to cook without electricity is the following website:
<https://www.survivopedia.com/how-to-cook-without-electricity/>

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