



Innovations in Outdoor Entertaining

CARE AND "FEEDING" OF YOUR BEEHIVE OVEN

Please read these important details carefully!

Terracotta Beehive Oven

A handcrafted, European, terracotta wood-fired oven. Oven specifications: 33" outside diameter, 22" internal diameter, door is 13.5" wide; oven height 25" and weight 350 lbs. Together the oven on its stand is approximately 35" in diameter, and fits through a standard garden gate.

The Beehive Oven lets you enjoy moist, flavorsome foods cooked in an authentic European wood-fired oven, but at a fraction of the cost of installing a commercial pizza oven. Virtually anything that can be cooked in a conventional oven can be cooked in the Beehive, but at shorter cooking temperatures, due to the heat intensity.

Your Beehive Oven is fueled using seasoned hard woods or fruit-wood, which impart a wonderful smoky flavor to food. The oven is constructed of two hand-made terracotta ovens, one inside the other, with a layer of insulation between. The outside of the oven gets warm, but not hot, to the touch, though care must be taken when working around the oven opening.

It is designed for high heat to build up internally and radiate from the dome down, and dissipate slowly, making it ideal for many types of cooking. Use long oven-gloves when working with the fire, and cookware designed for wood-fired ovens, such as the range of terracotta roasting dishes provided by Al Fresco Imports. Fish, poultry, meats, vegetables, pizzas and breads will generally cook faster in the Beehive Oven than in a conventional oven, and will be touched by the aroma of wood-fire.

You will find the Beehive Oven a pleasure to use, and fun to experiment with, as you gain experience building and controlling the fire, and creating delicious meals.

Intense heat and water do not mix! If the oven gets damp, start a small fire and build it up slowly to dry it out, avoiding building up a fierce heat. Over time you will notice cracks developing in the walls of the oven. These are normal characteristics of terracotta ovens due to the fluctuations in heat/cooking, and will not impair the oven's performance.

The Beehive Oven requires the weatherproof oven cover (included) to protect it from rain and frost. The oven must stay dry, since being allowed to sit on damp surface may crack the base. Never allow the oven to sit directly on a damp surface, and if you choose not to use the oven stand, place 4 tiles underneath the base of the oven to allow air to circulate beneath it.

Lighting, Seasoning, and Using the Beehive Oven

If your oven arrives in a crate, brush the oven down thoroughly with a dustpan and brush to remove loose terracotta dust and finish off with an old towel. Having built the stand following the directions provided, you will probably want to enlist a couple of friends to help lift the 350lb oven onto the stand. You may wish to slip a 2x4 under each side of the oven base to provide more lifting leverage, and gently ease the oven onto the assembled stand.

For your first fire in the Beehive Oven, start with a small one to season the oven, and remove any residual moisture. Do not plan to use the oven to cook with for this first firing. Using crunched paper, and small dry kindling wood, start by building a small fire at the back of the oven, and light the paper in 4 places. Progress to adding a couple of small logs for your seasoning fire, and spread or move the embers around the deck of the oven to season it thoroughly.

NEVER use soft wood (fir, pine) and do not use firelighters to start the fire, or chemical-based charcoal because they will coat the interior with a residue that will spoil the taste of oven-roasted food. Organic charcoal is fine to use in your Beehive because it contains no chemicals.

After the initial gentle firing in your oven, you can build a bigger one next time, using several logs, and increase the fire on subsequent firings. By the third firing, your oven is seasoned and you are ready to begin cooking. Using the same method to light the fire, add 4-6 logs to get a good fire underway. It will take about 45 minutes to an hour to reach cooking temperature, as the Beehive Oven walls absorb then reflect the heat. You will probably need to add a log every 15-20 minutes thereafter to maintain the heat. The best log sizes are around 8-10" long x 4-5" thick. If the fire gets too lively, use a long-handled oven tool or poker to knock it down and calm flames.

As with barbecues, the Beehive Oven can be dangerous if not treated with care. **STAY WITH YOUR OVEN**, and take sensible precautions while you have it lit. Keep small children away, and use long ovenproof gloves when handling tools and hot equipment. Do not use the door on the Beehive until the fire has died down to embers, and is less than 350 degrees, or it may singe.

The fire can be banked to the left or right side of the Beehive to allow maximum cooking space on the oven deck or floor. Due to the high temperature of the oven, foods will brown quickly, and will need covering with tin foil to avoid burning, while continuing to cook thoroughly. There are many options for cooking, depending on style, food type, and even the choice of wood you're using. Grilled or roasted meats, vegetables and fish do well in terracotta dishes or metal skillets (no plastic parts!), placed either on the deck of the oven, or on the rack. Pizzas and breads are cooked directly on the oven deck, and casseroles can be baked open-style or covered using the rack or in a dish on the deck. Care should be taken not to allow oils and foodstuffs to drip directly onto the oven floor, and a drip pan can be used to avoid this.

Once you have finished cooking, you can either let the fire die down entirely and put the oven door on it, or you can carefully use a wire brush to brush out the embers into a

tray of ice, and safely dispose of the embers carefully once cooled. Do not cover the oven until it has cooled.

Beehive Oven Stand

Sold as a duo with the Beehive Oven, this heavyweight iron stand on sturdy wheels lets you move the oven around. This handsome duo of rustic oven and iron stand make a focal point for your garden or patio, adds ambiance, and is a magnet for friends to draw around to take a turn cooking, give advice, or just gaze into the fire!

The Beehive Oven stand includes a convenient log storage rack. Use the oven and stand on a solid, flat surface that can sustain its weight, and away from overhanging tree limbs, or anything flammable. If the ground is uneven, place blocks against the wheels to avoid letting the oven roll. The black stand is powder-coated to protect against the weather and we recommend you apply a coat of car-wax to the oven stand within the first 3 months of use, and every year thereafter to guard against weather damage.

Oven Door

Hand-made of hardwood to complement the rustic design of the Beehive Oven, the oven door is coated inside with metal. **The oven door should be kept away from direct flames and intense heat -- and only be used at low temperatures (i.e. 375 degrees or less).** Though seldom used for most types of cooking, the door can be useful in controlling the oven heat during low-temperature cooking (e.g. foods requiring 375 degrees or less, such as bread baking), and when used as a smoker. The door is designed to be propped against the mouth of the oven rather than to fit fully closed, thus allowing enough oxygen to keep the fire alight.

Cooking Rack

Placed carefully into the oven once the fire is underway (you can then turn it to use horizontally) this iron cooking rack enables cooking on two levels at once. Since the oven is hotter at the top and the heat radiates from the top of the dome downwards, the rack is useful when cooking a dish of meats/fish on the rack, for example, while a dish of vegetables cook beneath it on the deck of the oven. Fire embers (or organic charcoal) can be flattened out over the center of the deck beneath the cooking rack, when cooking kebabs, fish, sausages, steaks etc. on a skillet. Care should be taken not to allow oils to drip directly onto the oven floor, and a drip pan should be used to avoid this. Use high temperature protective gloves when handling the oven rack, and whenever cooking with your Beehive Oven.

Beehive Oven Cover

The oven cover is water-resistant, and designed to be used to protect the Beehive Oven from the elements. It is made from top quality, heavy-duty nylon (of a green canvas appearance) and carries the Al Fresco Imports Beehive Oven logo. Apply the oven cover

once the oven has cooled completely, and the oven door is in place. In windy conditions, a simple and effective method of securing the cover to the stand is with bulldog (or binder) clips.