



A65 Making a hay box



A hay box is a traditional method of cooking. The food to be cooked is first heated to boiling point and then put in the insulated box. Over a period of time, the food will finish cooking. This is about three times the normal cooking time. Experiment using this method of cooking with produce from your garden. It is particularly suitable for casseroles and soups.

Resources

- Airtight wooden box, eg old toy box or tool chest. If necessary buy a flat-pack wooden crate/box, available from most DIY stores. The size of box required will depend on the size of cooking pot you will be using. It should allow for 20-30cm of insulation all around the pot
- Newspaper/card, double sided tape, scissors
- Fine hay (coarse hay is not suitable)
- Heavy cooking pot or saucepan with tight fitting lid
- Pillowcase
- Towel

Activity

- 1 Line the box with a thick layer of newspaper or card sticking it to the box with double sided tape. Overlap the edges of this insulating layer to cover any gaps in the box. Insulate the lid in the same way.

- 2 Pack the box three-quarters full with hay and hollow out a large enough 'nest' to hold your cooking pot.
- 3 Fill the pillowcase with hay until it is large enough to fill the remaining space in the box.
- 4 Make sure the food you are cooking is boiling briskly. Wrap the container in a clean towel and transfer to the hay box. Place the hay filled pillowcase on top of the cooking pot and close the lid of the box.
- 5 The amount of cooking time needed in the hay box depends on the length of the preliminary boiling and how tightly the hay is packed around the cooking pot.

Extended activities

- 1 There are many techniques for making a hay box, research different construction methods/materials, eg polystyrene.
- 2 During the Second World War the hay box was used extensively. Find out about the use of hay box cooking during this time.

Health & Safety

Make sure the food is boiling thoroughly before placing it into the hay box. Take care not to allow the food to cool too much so that it becomes a health hazard. As a general rule the food should be kept above 60°C. Avoid using dried pulse vegetables because they may not cook thoroughly and could be unsafe to eat.

See also Health and Safety Guidelines (Section SG1.2)

Further information

G4.14 Managing power