

The Wonderbox Cooker

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In a recent article published by respected author and Survival Blog founder, **James Rawles Warns that in a grid-down or economic crisis:** *“You’re gonna want to be able to cook without any spices whatsoever... From an efficiency standpoint... you’re going to want to use a special insulated cooker... It’s essentially like crock-pot cooking where you bring your water to a boil, add your rice, meat, vegetables, whatever... and you’re going to enclose it in a double-insulated container. **With that cooking method you have a couple of advantages. One is you don’t have cooking odors escaping and the other is you have the absolute minimum energy input.*** (http://www.thedailysheep.com/james-rawles-warns-be-prepared-to-hunker-down-for-months_092013#sthash.qrf4TOKk.dpuf)

We live during times of great uncertainty. Warnings of food and fuel shortage amid impending economic upheaval have motivated many of us to prepare for a myriad of possible scenarios. We have discovered that the Wonder Box Cooker fills the need to conserve fuel as well as prepare delicious meals. Using very little fuel, you can bring your food to the required temperature, then allow it to snuggle into its thermally insulated cocoon to continue cooking for hours. While camping, we can prepare dinner over the breakfast fire, tuck it away in the Wonder Box and hours later open a steaming pot of stew, rice, cassarole or jambalaya. Delicious!

Using the Wonder Box Cooker is Simple!

- Boil your food in the Wonder Box Pot for 5 to 10 minutes until the food is heated to boiling temperature through out. [Different foods may vary – see chart within this article]
- We use a stainless steel pot that can be found at WalMart or Kmart. Make sure it does not have a long handle and has a lid that fits well. The Wonder Box does not work as well if there is a large air space. Everything should fit snug and tight.
- Put the lid on the pot before you remove it from the stove or campfire so the lid can also get hot. Have the Wonder Box nearby so you don’t lose too much heat. Place the pot into the nest of the Wonder Box and quickly cover with the top cushion making sure there are no gaps or air pockets.
- Do not open the lid while cooking or the food will lose heat and may not cook properly.
- Do not leave the Wonder Box on a metal surface as this will draw heat away through the bottom.

- When cooking meat, like a roast or a whole chicken, it is important that the liquid covers the meat and that it has come to a boil. Meat must be covered with liquid! Plan on cooking for at least 4 hours or all day. It will never burn.
- The Wonder Box was designed for cooking meals, but is also used to keep food hot, cold or frozen for 3 to 6 hours. We also use ours when grocery shopping and can keep ice cream frozen solid for several hours in a hot car without having to rush home.
- We've made our Wonder Box from cotton material and filled with polystyrene balls (like those in a bean bag chair). This Wonder Box can be washed with hot water and soap and hung on the line to dry.



Our Wonder Box is also the best yogurt maker we have ever come across. Here is our recipe.

Yogurt by the Gallon

4 cups powdered Milk
4 quarts of warm water

or

1 Gallon of Whole Milk
1 cup of powdered Milk

Mix well, heat to scald (165°F), cool to luke warm (between 100-110°F). Use your stainless steel pot that came with your Wonderbox. We've found that pasteurized milk can simply be warmed up to 110°F. The scalding is designed to kill any bacteria or microbes that may compete with the yogurt start or inoculant that you want to promote in making your yogurt.

Add to your warm milk 1 cup of starter – plain commercial yogurt or yogurt from a previous batch. You can also purchase powdered yogurt starter that works well.

Mix well and place your pot with the lid into the Wonder Box. Put on lid and tuck in securely. Leave undisturbed for 12-14 hours (over night). It will have thickened and set up nicely. It will thicken even more by refrigerating.

Now here is the secret between good homemade yogurt and GREAT yogurt!. We like our yogurt to be a little thicker – like the popular Greek yogurt. Greek yogurt is not some special strain of bacteria from Greece, rather Greek yogurt has some of the whey strained from it. (of course most commercial yogurts and Greek yogurts add thickener and all sorts of other undesirable chemicals)

Here's what you do. Go to the hardware or paint store and pick up a couple packs of Paint Strainers. You heard me right, Paint Strainers. These are the greatest tools ever. Do not waste your time with cheap crummy cheese cloth to strain anything. Get paint strainers – they come in 1 gallon or 5 gallon sizes. You will need at least two, probably three. Nest them inside of each other and pour in your yogurt. If you don't have a double or triple thickness, the yogurt (a lot of it) will strain right through. Triple thickness will catch the curds (milk solids) and strain out the whey (the clear liquid). Hang the yogurt filled paint strainer – we typically hang from a cupboard handle tied with string, and a bowl underneath to catch the whey. Depending on how thick you want your yogurt, you can hang it for 3 to 24 hours. The longer you let it strain/hang, the thicker your finished product. 24 hours is pretty close to cream cheese.

Once strained to your desired thickness (try it over night for your first venture) – stir it up in a bowl to even out the thickness (it will be thicker around the edges than in the middle) and add raw honey and vanilla extract for flavor. Serve with homemade granola, raw milk and fresh fruit.

Rinse your paint strainers, throw in the wash and save for next time. They last forever.

Here is the chart we use when making food in our Wonder Box.

Retained-Heat Cooking Times-(Approximate)

Food	Simmering Time	Wonder Box Time
White rice	5 minutes	1-2 hours
Brown rice	10-15 minutes	2 hours
Potatoes, whole white	5-10 minutes	1-2 hours
Creamed soups	2 minutes	1 hour
Dried beans, etc., soaked	10-15 minutes	3-4 hours
Meat roast	20-30 minutes	3-5 hours

The major benefit of the Wonder Box is to reduce the fuel you need to cook your meals. Simply bring your food to boiling temperature and then turning off the heat and quickly placing the pot in the Wonder Box. *[The important point is to make sure that the food is at boiling temperature throughout, so large pieces of meat may need to be cubed or make sure you give it time to heat thoroughly].* The heat already in your food, combined with the insulation of the Wonder Box, will allow your meal to keep cooking “at safe cooking temperatures” for hours. Remember, the less space there is around the pot, the less heat will be lost. You can't burn food in a Wonder Box. As long as your food stays over 160° F, your food can cook all day.

You can save up to 80% of your needed fuel by using a Wonder Box because the heat used for simmering is eliminated. Most meals that you would cook in a Crock Pot can be cooked in a Wonder Box. With a little creativity, even other foods can be cooked in the Wonder Box. For example, a few whole potatoes in an oven cooking bag placed in a pot of water brought to a boil, will cook without being water logged. As a slow cooker the Wonder Box will cook rice in about an hour, a whole chicken in 3-4 hours.

There are many patterns to make your own Wonder Box online or you can purchase a Wonder Box with a perfectly fitting pot.

For more details on getting a Wonder Box and Recipes send us an email at kylesinthegarden@gmail.com