

Thermos Bottle Cooking

There are three kinds of thermos bottles but only one is practical. Forget the cheap, plastic ones lined with Styrofoam. These might cook oatmeal and white rice but do not have the heat holding power you need. Silvered glass thermoses are fine, but a bump will break them. Also, since you are going to do actual cooking and will use a fork to remove the contents, they will not hold up. The only practical cooking thermos is the Aladdin Stanley. It is lined with stainless steel, is well insulated and will keep steaming hot for up to 24 hours and holds a quart. It is also unbreakable, with a lifetime warranty. It costs \$22.00 at Wal-Mart or can be ordered through any sporting goods store. It would save you its price in a few days. If you have a family, get two or three.

Most foods cook at 180 degrees or more. We are used to boiling, which is 212 degrees, and foods do cook faster, the higher the temperature. But if time is not important, cooking at a lower temperature is even better as most vitamins are not broken down. Thus, if you cook at a minimum heat, you save nutrition. A great factor in thermos cooking is the saving in the cost of energy. Whereas it would take about two hours to cook whole-grain wheat or nearly an hour to cook brown rice.

Thermos cookery takes only five minutes to cook anything. So it is indeed possible to save as much in energy as you spend on the food. You can imagine the convenience of thermos cookery in camping, which would save on wood, weight of food carried, and no food odors to alert bears or enemies. Thermos cookery is also an advantage to anyone living where he is not allowed to cook. There are no cooking odors to tip off the landlord. First, you need the thermos. Then you need a heat source. If you are in a non-cooking room, buy a cheap, one burner hot plate from your local Wal-Mart, Target, Sears etc. You will need a one quart saucepan. You will also need a special funnel to quickly pour the pan's contents into the thermos, plus a spoon or fork to help the last of the food into the funnel. To make the funnel, cut off the bottom four inches from a gallon plastic milk container. If you do not buy milk or cannot find an empty container, go to your nearest laundromat. You will find in the trash receptacle, an empty gallon bleach bottle. Use that the same as the milk container but wash it until there is no more bleach odor.

The first step in thermos cookery is to fill the thermos with water up to the point reached by the stopper. Empty the water into the saucepan and make a scratch or other indelible mark at the water's surface inside the saucepan. This will allow you to put just enough water in the saucepan, as too much will leave food out and too little will give you less cooking water. Just to test how the cooker works, start with four ounces of wheat. You do not need to buy 60 pounds. You can buy two pounds from your health food store for about \$.80 This would give you eight meals at 10 cents each. In the evening, put four ounces in your saucepan, plus a half-teaspoon of salt to prevent flatness, even if you intend to sweeten it. Fill to the mark with water. (If you have hot water, let the tap run until it is hottest. Tests have shown that less energy is used in using hot tap water than in boiling from cold.) Bring the contents to a rolling boil, stirring all the while. This will take from three to five minutes. Then quickly, but carefully, swirl and pour the contents into the funnel and help any lagging matter from the pan to the funnel and into the thermos. Cap firmly but not tightly, shake and lay the thermos on its side, to keep the contents even. Next morning open the thermos and pour its contents into the saucepan. With four ounces of dry wheat, you will now have at least 3/4 pound of cooked wheat and about a pint of vitamin and mineral enriched water. It has a pleasant taste. Drink it. You can now put milk and sweetener on it or margarine, salt and pepper, etc. If you can eat the whole 3/4 of a pound, you will be surprised at how energetic you feel for the next several hours. An added bonus is its high fiber content. Having tried the four ounce portion, you might next use eight ounces. This will absorb most of the water. It is unlikely that you could eat a pound and a half of cooked whole grain wheat. You can either divide it and eat the other half for supper or if you are a family man, make it the family breakfast food to replace the expensive brand.

For lunch, prepare a few ounces of hamburger or other meat chopped finely, plus chopped potatoes and other vegetables the night before. After breakfast, put these and the right amount of water in the saucepan and prepare as usual. At lunchtime you will have a quart of really delicious stew. Since nothing leaves the thermos in cooking, as contrasted to the flavor leaving stew cooking on the stove, you can understand the better tasting, higher vitamin content of thermos stew. Lunch and possibly supper should not cost you more than 25 cents if you study the article on the dehydrator. Jerky and dried vegetable stew is good and costs little. The brown rice dishes could also be either a main course or desert. Brown rice has a much greater swelling factor than wheat so four ounces of rice will pretty much fill the thermos.

You can put vegetables and meat in it to cook or try a favorite of mine. It is four ounces of brown rice, 9 cents; one ounce of powdered milk, 10 cents in a large box; two ounces of raisins, 22 cents; one teaspoon of salt; some cinnamon and four saccharine tablets. Cook overnight. This is 46 cents for 1 1/2 pounds of desert.

With some experimenting, you can become an expert in thermos cookery. If you are single and live alone, you could, conceivably, eat nothing except what you cooked in a thermos. But if you are married, and especially if you have children, don't push it. Even with the economy of this system, it's not worth alienating your family. If your wife doesn't like it, challenge her to make the food tastier and think up some thermos recipes. You might also tell her the advantages of thermos cookery. For one thing, she would spend much less time in the kitchen. What with the expected brownouts, she could do all the cooking in five, ten, fifteen minutes, depending on how many thermos bottles she used. Another important factor is that, especially during the heat waves, the home would not suffer the added heat from the kitchen. This would also cut down on the air conditioning costs. A tip you may not have known is that the pilot light in a gas stove not only raises the temperature in the kitchen but also accounts for a fourth of all the gas burned in the stove. Matches are much cheaper. Turn the pilot light off.