

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. So I like to think that I'm pretty comfortable with cast iron. I've used it for a long time, have lots of pieces, but recently when I dove into the process of trying to rescue a very neglected skillet, I realized I had a few things to learn. So after making a couple mistakes, I have some interesting little tidbits to share with you in today's episode. I'm your host Jill winger, and this is the podcast for the trailblazers, the Mavericks, the makers, the modern day homesteaders, the backyard farmers, and the modern pioneers. And if you find yourself disenchanted with conformity and you just liked to swim upstream while the rest of the herd rides the river of least resistance, well you found your tribe. Okay, so little bit of extra info in case you're really into this topic. And I know a lot of you are, whenever I talk about cast iron, it gets a lot of traction.

Speaker 1 ([01:03](#)):

But, on this podcast, episodes number 69 and 55, cover more info on getting your first skillet, how to care for a skillet on a daily basis, all that good stuff. And I also have a video on YouTube where you actually can see me going through this process in real time of this exact skillet that I'm talking about on today's episode. So I'll leave the link to that video in the show notes, but it's a little more visual if that's how you roll. Now, I know some of you though, don't like watch a lot of YouTube videos, so I thought it would be fun to do a podcast walk through as well. So here's the backstory of my cast iron saga. So I have this skillet. It's, I think it's an 10 inch, maybe nine inch. It's been hanging in my kitchen close to a decade. I would say.

Speaker 1 ([01:56](#)):

I'm a little embarrassed to admit that and I have never really done anything with it. I got it at a garage sale. I think it was like I got a bunch of stuff at the same time at a garage. So it was like in a lot of cast iron, it's a deeper skillet, so it's like twice as high as your typical skillet. And it's kind of part of the reason I just steered away from it because it's a weird size, but it's still a really good pan. And I noticed after I got it that it had like part of the surface layer of seasoning was really chipped off, like there is a Ridge of this seasoning layer that is gone. So it needed some serious TLC. And I dunno, maybe four or five years ago, I attempted a quick reseasoning of it and then I did that quite poorly and it obviously didn't do a thing for the giant ridges of missing surface coating and it just left some weird spotting on the bottom of the pan.

Speaker 1 ([02:56](#)):

So I basically just stuck it in the kitchen in the back of my rack and ignored it, for all that time until now. So I decided it was time to try to save this poor little skillet, bring it back into daily use. And so I knew it was going to be a little more intense than your typical, like generally when you have a skillet or a piece of cast iron that needs just a small amount of seasoning, you can clean it with soap and water and cover it with some oil and bake it a few times in your oven. This, this one needed a little bit more than that. So I commandeered Christian, we went out to the shop to see what we could do. We ended up, well we needed to strip it basically. And there's a number of recommendations that float around for stripping down a pan to the bare metal.

Speaker 1 ([03:49](#)):

Many of them involve very toxic chemicals that I'm not comfortable using. I've heard stories of people like soaking their pan in like acid and some people recommend a giant bucket of lye like lye that you use for making soap, which you have to be really, really careful with lye even when you're making this soap.

Like there is a process and it can be very dangerous. So like having a five gallon bucket of lye just didn't make me feel super comfortable. And there's a couple other methods where you're like soaking it in garbage bags. Like I just didn't want to go there. So we decided to go with a manual stripping process, basically sanding it. So Christian has a lots of power tools, lots of drills. So he rigged up one of his drills. I actually, he said it's a die grinder.

Speaker 1 ([04:41](#)):

I don't know what that is. I'm just telling you what he told me. It looked like a drill to me, but apparently it's not. And he put on a sanding disc and he went to town on this skillet and it took, I dunno, five or 10 minutes. He used a couple of different grits, but he was able to get it down to bare metal and that's what I wanted. It removed. All of that chipped off coating. It removed all of the seasoning that I had messed up prior and it was shiny gray, naked metal basically. Now I wouldn't have gone as hardcore his power tools if the skillet had just needed a little bit of work, like steel wool can be an option. You can use regular sandpaper if you just have a light layer that needs to be removed. You don't have to go full on power tool.

Speaker 1 ([05:30](#)):

But this guy, it needed some help. It was in need of some serious work, so we ground it down. It looked beautiful. It was shiny, it was ready to roll. So I took it in the house, I washed it really well, dried it really well, and then decided it was time to put the seasoning back on to reseason it. This is where things went slightly South. There's a lot of conflicting information about cast iron reseasoning online. Well, there's really conflicting information about everything online, but when it comes to cast iron, there's a lot of urban legends, a lot of very opinionated people with a lot of different ideas. What I usually do when I get into those situations with information, I kind of try to take an average of the recommendations and people said basically any, well depending on where you looked, but there were people saying that every oil under the sun could work or would work.

Speaker 1 ([06:27](#)):

A lot of people recommended vegetable oils and canola oils and I just don't use those in my kitchen. I don't like the health issues associated with those, so I don't buy them. I don't have them. So those were off the table. I heard a few people recommend flaxseed oil. I don't have that either. I didn't really feel like buying it. You need 100% pure flaxseed. Wasn't interested in trying to hunt that down in our little town with slim options. I had people recommend lard. I heard other people say lard is fine. Bacon Grease is not. But coconut oil kept coming up and I had a lot of coconut oil and coconut oil is something I use frequently, so I decided to give coconut oil a try. I even have a book that says coconut oil is the best recommendation out of every single oil option they experimented with.

Speaker 1 ([07:16](#)):

So I thought I couldn't go wrong. Then it came down to figuring out what temperature to bake this pan. So I rubbed it down with coconut oil inside and out and I made sure the layer was very thin because all the sources I read recommended that the layer be so thin you almost can't even tell it has oil on it. Right? So I did that and then it was trying to figure out the temperature and I saw recommendations for everything from 200 degrees to 550 degrees to 365 degrees. Like it ran the gamut. So I kind of decided to go in the middle ish. So I had my skillet layered with coconut oil. I popped it in the oven at 400 degrees and I baked it for 30 minutes. I saw a lot of people recommend 30 to 60 minutes. They went on the 30 minute side.

Speaker 1 ([08:06](#)):

I put it upside down, piece of foil underneath to catch any drips on the rack underneath the rack that held the pan. If you can visualize that and I let it do its thing. So they said it would take a couple repeats of this process. And I did. I did it actually four times. The timer would go off, I pull it out, add on another layer, put it back in for another 30 minutes. It took a majority of the day to get this done and it was like five o'clock in the evening. I pulled it out after its fourth bake and I was like really disappointed in the result. The pan had these like spotty stripes all over the bottom, which people were saying that was as a result of using too much oil. And I like, I don't know how I'm using too oil because I put hardly any on there.

Speaker 1 ([08:58](#)):

And it was sticky and a cast iron pan with a sticky coating of seasoning is like is bad. It's what you don't want. And I'm like, how is this possible after all this baking for rounds? Like this is not working. It also was still very, very uh, light colored. It still looked like raw metal, which I was hoping it would have blackened a little bit at that point. And when I would wipe it the surface with a clean paper towel, the paper towel would come back dirty and Brown. So I knew that the seasoning layer was not actually adhered to the metal yet. So anyway, I had a slight little like panic attack because I'm like, what am I going to do now? Like this didn't work. And of course I'm filming it the whole time. So if you watch the video, you'll see me go, uh oh, pivot.

Speaker 1 ([09:51](#)):

Like trying something new. So long story short, I'll spare you the gory details. Hey friends, I'm interrupting this episode for just a sec so we can talk about seeds. I'm getting a ton of emails and messages right now from folks who are on the hunt for a reliable source of organic heirloom seeds. And I just have to say I have fallen head over heels for true leaf market lately in the past. I've gotten really frustrated when I try to find certain seeds locally because they're either sold out or they just don't have the varieties I want. But true leaf market is like having a virtual seed rack in your home at your fingertips, they have a ton of varieties including all the vegetables, the herbs, the flowers, the microgreens and their seeds have a very high germination rate and bonus. They ship crazy fast. Head on over to theprairiehomestead.com/seeds to have a look at their very user friendly website and add a packet or 12 maybe to your seed stash for this year.

Speaker 1 ([10:57](#)):

And now back to our episode, I did a bunch of more reading turns out, I don't think I baked it long enough so I think I did two things wrong. I think coconut oil was not a great option and I think I baked it at a too short of a time frame on too low of a temperature. So when we're trying to reseason a cast iron pan, it's more than just putting oil and hoping the oil sticks on the surface of the cast iron. It's actually bonding and it's, I'm not, I'm not gonna be able to say this without butchering polymerization. I'm sure that was a horrible pronunciation of that. But that is the process where this layer of fat or oil actually becomes part of the pan. And that's what makes cast iron nonstick. That's what's the, that's the magic of cast iron that's seasoned well.

Speaker 1 ([11:50](#)):

And so I don't believe that my 30 minute bakes at 400 degrees were enough to get that coconut oil to bond to the pan. And I also was reading it, flaxseed oil is like considered to be a drying oil, which I'm not really sure how to describe that, but it is more prone to bonding and it creates a very, very hard layer.

And that's why people love flaxseed oil. So it was 5:30 and on a Sunday night, and I'm not feeling the need to go to town to get some flax seed oil 40 minutes away. So I decided to try lard cause that was another fat that was recommended usually in the next breath from the experts after they mentioned flaxseed oil. And I had real lard that I had rendered myself. It wasn't the store bought hydrogenated lard and I decided to give it a try.

Speaker 1 ([12:41](#)):

So I put on another thin layer. I kind of wiped off the coconut oil that I could get it, not as sticky, put on the lard and I put it in a cold tub and turn the oven on and baked it for an hour at 500 degrees that I turned off the oven and let it cool down completely. And when I was able to pull it out after the cooldown period, there was a considerable difference. The pan was finally beginning to darken the surface was not sticky. And so I repeated that one more time and it just kept getting better. So all of that to say, number one, you can't mess up cast iron. So if you do what I did and you mess up on your oil, your times and your temperature, it's all good. Number two, I highly recommend using either flaxseed oil or a really good lard.

Speaker 1 ([13:33](#)):

If you're going to reseason a naked pan or even just a pan that needs a touch up, I think you're going to have way better results. Number three, make sure you're like, I'd say 500 degrees is a good place to start and leave it in there for an hour. Don't undercook it and don't go low on your temp cause it just won't make that layer bake on there like it needs to. And when I kind of called it good, after my second round of lard, I had four rounds of coconut oil and two rounds of lard and I'm like, okay, I need to do something else with my life other than watch this skillet in the oven. But it looks pretty darn good. It's definitely better than it was. And my plan now is just to keep using it and use it a lot.

Speaker 1 ([14:15](#)):

So last night I fried up steaks with a lot of butter, super fatty. If you can cook those fatty foods right after you season your skillet, that's just going to continue to help the process, make some bacon, do some frying. But that's going to just make your pans better and better and better. So that is my story of attempting to salvage Japan, messing it up. But I think we're on the right track. But when it comes to cast iron, don't be afraid to dive in. The thing I love about it, it's really, really hard to mess up permanently. Like you might a mistake, but it's very forgiving. You can usually get it back to a point where you can start over and try again. So if you are falling in love with the idea of an old fashioned intentional kitchen full of nourishing food and rich memories, you will love my heritage kitchen handbook. It's a little e-guide. I have packed full of my very best tricks for cooking and eating like a farmer, even if you live in the city and you can grab it for free over at heritagekitchenhandbook.com. And that's it, my friend. Don't forget to hit subscribe, so all the new episodes show up automatically in your podcast player and leave a little review or rating while you're over there. If you enjoyed today's episode. Thanks so much for listening. We'll chat more on the next episode of the old fashioned on purpose podcast.