

SUN OVEN HACKS

By Gemie Martin

Wikipedia says a “life hack” is “. . . any trick, shortcut, skill, or novelty method that increases productivity and efficiency.” In using my Sun Oven I have come up with a few “Sun Oven hacks” which have made cooking with my Sun Oven easier and more efficient. I wanted to share these hacks and a few of my favorite recipes that I cook in my Sun Oven with you.

The Bean Bag Chair Hack. The first hack is to replace the leg and stand with a bean bag chair. I found adjusting the leg of my sun oven to be difficult. I often had to get down on the ground to adjust the leg. It was time consuming and somewhat difficult. If what I was cooking had a lot of liquid in it, the jostling of adjusting the leg would cause liquid to spill out. I longed for an easier way to focus my Sun Oven to capture the most intense rays of the sun. I remember thinking, “If I could just swivel the oven around, it would be easier.” An idea came to me. I bought an inexpensive beanbag chair with a vinyl cover (so it can be wiped clean) and put it out in the middle of my back yard. I then set my oven in it. I was amazed at how much easier it was to focus my oven by swiveling it around in the beanbag chair. I have not used the leg since. If you do this, completely remove the leg so it does not poke a hole in the bean bag chair. I store my leg in the box my oven came in just in case we go camping and do not have enough space to take the bean bag along. In the early morning, you must set the oven back far enough into the bean bag chair such that it provides enough support so as not to let the oven tip over. (If this does not make sense to you now, it probably will after you try it.) As you gently swivel the oven around in the bean bag chair, use the trackers and focus your oven to capture the sun’s rays.

The Silicone Baking Liner Hack. The second Sun Oven hack, is to use a silicone baking liner or mat on the leveling rack of the Sun Oven. My older Global Sun Oven model (which I still own) has a leveling rack or shelf that had a lip on it. This seemed to limit how much sliding around the pots and pans could do. When I purchased my All American Sun Oven, I noticed that the leveling rack that came with it had no lip and my pots and pans with liquid in them were sliding around and spilling into the interior of the oven when I would adjust and focus it. I purchased a small silicone baking liner about 8 ¼" X 11½" (the size that fits a quarter-size sheet pan) and put that on the rack. It made a big difference. The liner seemed to grab the bottom of the pan, keeping it in place. It seems to have made no difference in how the food cooks and being silicone, it is safe to cook with even at high temperatures.

The Pillow Cover Storage Hack. I store my racks and other accessories (except the pans and bread pans) that came with my Sun Oven in a zippered pillow cover inside my Sun Oven. This keeps them from scratching the interior of the oven and at the same time saving space by using the oven itself as a storage container. I am sure a regular pillowcase (and there are probably other things) would also work as well.

One final tip from me: To protect your eyes, wear sunglasses when working with your Sun Oven.

RECIPES

Sun Oven Maple Oat Bread

(Can't remember where I got this recipe but it is a good one)

1 1/3 cups water
2 tablespoons maple syrup
3 cups white bread flour
1 cup whole wheat bread flour
1/2 cup rolled oats
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
3 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon rapid-rise active dry yeast

Pour the water into the pan of a bread machine and add the maple syrup. Sprinkle the flours and oats over the water mixture making sure to completely cover it. Place the salt, sugar, and butter in separate corners of the pan. Make a shallow indentation in the center of the flour and add the yeast. Set the machine to the dough setting and press start.

When the cycle has finished turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and punch down gently. Shape the dough into a loaf and put it in a lightly oiled bread pan. Cover with oiled plastic wrap and let rise in a warm spot 30 to 40 minutes. Set the Sun Oven out to preheat while the bread rises. Do not let bread rise completely (let rise to within 1/2 inch of the top of the pan). Spray lightly with water and put into the Sun Oven to bake. Bake until lightly golden and sounds hollow when tapped, 45 minutes to an hour.

Note: Bread may be mixed by hand or another brand of mixer. I like to double the recipe (using my K-Tec mixer) and baked two loaves in my Sun Oven at once.

Gemie Martin's Baked Beans

1 large (28 oz.) and one small (15 oz.) can Pork and Beans
1/2-3/4 pound bacon (chopped, cooked, and drained)
2 bell peppers (diced)
1 1/2 medium onion (chopped)
10 oz. Catsup
1/3 cup brown sugar
1 cup unsweetened applesauce
2 Tablespoons Worcestershire Sauce
1 Tablespoon Spicy Brown Mustard

Mix all ingredients and put in a pan to bake. If baking in the Sun Oven, put in a dark covered pan. (I use a Granite Ware pan.) Bake at 300° for 2 or more hours.

Pepsi Brisket (BBQ Sandwiches)

1 large beef brisket (I usually get one that is about 16 lbs.)
12-14 ounces Pepsi (I use caffeine free but NOT sugar free)
2 (12 ounce) bottles chili sauce
1 large turkey bag
BBQ sauce to taste (optional—add after baking)

Trim off some of the fat from the brisket if you desire. Put 1 Tablespoon flour in bag and shake it to coat the bag. Put the brisket in the bag. Pour the Pepsi in. Tie up the bag (tightly with the tie provided) and marinate for at least 8 hours turning (if possible) half way through to get both sides. Place in a roasting pan or a large jelly roll pan. Open the bag and add chili sauce (I put half on each side). Leave the Pepsi in. Tie the bag up tight and cut slits on the top (the fat side). (See below to modify for the Sun Oven.) Bake at 325° for an hour. Reduce heat to 280° and bake for 3-5 hours more until tender when carving fork is inserted through bag into meat. Drain and reserve juices. (I use a fat separator to eliminate the fat). Cut meat across the grain. Add the juices back in and heat in large sauce pan or crock pot. I often add BBQ sauce (I like KC Masterpiece or Sweet Baby Rays) during the last few minutes of heating (longer if crock pot is used). Serve on buns. Optional: Top meat with coleslaw (no dressing) for a crunchy sandwich.

To modify for the Sun Oven marinate as above. Start preheating the oven as early in the morning as you can get sunlight. Remove the bag with brisket and add the Chili Sauce and close the bag. **Do not slit the baking bag.** Fold the sides of the leveling rack and place the rack on the bottom of the oven with the sides underneath and the flat part on top. Put the bag with brisket in it in the oven on the rack. (You may cook using the turkey rack, but I have not done this). Focus the oven and begin baking and adjusting every half hour. If you need to leave for a few hours, focus the oven where it will catch the direct rays during the most intense sunlight of the day (as if to cook like a slow cooker). The size of the roast will determine how long it takes to cook. Finish as above.

Stay-a-bed Stew (I got this recipe many years ago a friend of mine)

1 ½ -2 pounds stew meat (I usually flour and brown it before putting it in the pot).
1 can tiny peas (I use Le Sueur)
1 cup sliced carrots
1 onion, (chopped)
½ package Lipton Onion Soup Mix (dry)
1 can tomato soup (thin with ½ can water if concentrated soup is used)
2 large raw sliced potatoes
1 teaspoon salt
1 large bay leaf

Mix in a casserole dish with a tight lid (or cook in a crock-pot or Sun Oven.). Bake at 270 ° for 5 hours. With the Sun Oven you can set this as a slow cooker. It usually does not take 5 hours in a slow cooker if you are focusing the rays and cooking. I use the Granite Ware pot with the clear glass lid (that came with my Sun Oven) for this recipe. That way I can see how it is cooking. If it is boiling too hard, I focus it for less intense sun to slow it down.