

## Hearth History

Hearths date back as far as 2500 B.C. Even though styles have changed over the centuries the hearth has always been the center of the home -- it provided heat and hearty meals to keep everyone in the family warm and full. Unlike an open fire pit, the hearth provided the fire with shelter from the wind and rain. It also gave the cook a more controlled cooking environment. The metal cranes within the hearth move in and out, allowing the cook to better regulate the temperature of the food. Most hearths could hold at least two fires, allowing someone to heat two things at the same time.

*Do you have a fire place in your home?  
How do you or your parents heat the food you eat?*

Hearths were fashioned from different types of stone depending on what was available in your area at the time (brick, granite, marble, field stones, etc.). Likewise, the wood burned in the hearth was also location dependent. Hardwoods were preferred – ash, oak, and hickory – because softer woods did not provide as many coals for baking. Once the fire burned up the wood, small coals were produced, similar to the charcoal used for grilling today. These coals could be placed underneath and on top the lid of a Dutch oven pot to bake things like cakes, bread, and rolls.

*If you had a hearth in your home, what would you cook or bake in it?*



# Brunswick stew Recipe

Brunswick stew had many different versions. It was a very versatile meal because the ingredients could be changed or omitted depending of what you had available. Below is one version of this historic recipe. Feel free to tweak the ingredients to suit your family's needs just like historic cooks have done for years.

## *Ingredients:*

- 1 ½ pounds boneless chicken breast or thighs, cooked until done and shredded
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 pound Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- ½ - 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt, or to taste
- ¾ - 1 tablespoon sugar
- 14 ounces canned, crushed tomatoes plus their juices
- 14 ounces canned, drained butter beans (lima beans can be substituted)
- 14 ounces canned, drained white shoe peg corn, drained (use fresh if in season, or frozen)
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- Smoked paprika to taste

## *Directions:*

1. Add chicken, broth, potatoes, onions, black pepper, cayenne pepper, salt, and sugar to a pot. Bring mixture to a boil.
2. Reduce the heat to medium and cook, uncovered, until the potatoes are soft (approximately 30 minutes).
3. Stir in tomatoes and their juices, and the beans. Cook an additional 15-20 minutes. Stir in the corn and butter pieces. Let the stew cook an hour longer so it becomes nice and thick.
4. Serve the stew hot with a side of bread or a salad. Refrigerate any leftovers. Once cool, this stew can be frozen as well.

