

Okeover Community Garden Cob Oven



The cob oven, located in the Okeover Community Garden, was made by a group of volunteers in 2005 and is great for cooking pizzas. Cob is an ancient building material usually made of clay, sand, straw and water. This guide gives you some short instructions on how to use the cob oven to make your own pizzas.

What you'll need...

		
Kindling for the fire (twigs and paper)	Dry wood (wood that has been dried for at least a year)	Water close at hand
	The stick with wet rags on the end, the oven broom, and the metal tool to move the ash (stored in open shed near oven) (sorry no photo)	
Something to stoke the fire with		Dough for the pizzas
		
Pizza toppings and helping hands	Pizza shovel	Brush for cleaning out the ash

Lighting the Cob Oven

The cob oven in the Okeover Community Garden has no chimney so it is important to make sure the fire gets enough oxygen and does not smother itself. It is also important to make sure the fire burns all the way to the back of the oven and not just at the front. For the fire to get enough air it must be lit in the middle of the oven with room for oxygen flow around the outside (about 10cm). If you like you can create a barrier with bricks to contain the fire in the centre of the oven.

Some important safety tips...

Make sure you have a water source ready and close at hand.

Clear away any wood or rubbish at the base of the oven before you light the fire.

Make sure there is no plastic near the oven, and don't wear plastic gloves when tending to the fire.

How to light the cob oven

1. Start the fire with twigs and paper in the middle of the oven. Make sure there is room around the outside of the fire for oxygen flow.
2. When the twigs have caught alight build the fire up with small bits dry wood. If the fire gets too big it will smother itself and go out.
3. Keep the fire going. It will take about four hours for the oven to become hot enough to cook your pizzas.
4. When the fire is hot enough, and the flames have died down, push the embers to the side of the oven, the cleared bricks are used for cooking.
5. Give the cooking area a quick clean with the stick with rags on the end, (wet the rags).
6. The oven is now ready to cook pizzas. But watch out! It is so hot that the pizzas will only take a couple of minutes each.
7. The bricks will cool down after several pizzas and the ashes will then need to be dragged back from the other side, and the new area (where the hot ashes were), used for the pizzas. Continue to alternate from side to side. (If the heap of hot ashes gets small, the fire needs to be renewed with some more firewood, and pizza cooking may need to have a break until the flames die down.)
8. Enjoy your pizzas!
9. When you've finished with the oven make sure it is all cleaned out. The ash, along with any food scraps, can go on the compost heap also located in the garden.



NB. After the pizza cooking, the oven can be used for baking. The ashes are raked out into the metal bucket and the oven is shut with the door and left to equalise for about 15 minutes. Do not use the door if there are hot ashes still inside as it turns the oven into a forge, forcing a draught in and cooking the door. (We are now on door no.3). Usually a pizza temperature is too hot for baking bread and the oven has to be left to cool down considerably for bread.

For information about Okeover Community Garden visit http://www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/comm_garden