

# Summer kitchen

Come May and the earth dries, we move out to summer kitchen. This brings with it more work and black fingerprints but also means more time being spent outside, gazing at the open sky, listening to birds and following the chores of ants. In summer kitchen you feel to be part of nature and not bound inside the walls in midst of pots and kettles. Cooking on open fire is it's own thing; you learn to know the fire in a whole different way as opposed to it being shackled inside a woodstove.

## Twigs as campfire fuel

While burning dry twigs and branches inside is tricky, doing so in a campfire is easy. This also reduces the amount of firewood needed, especially if campfire season is started at the beginning of May. Using woodstove during summertime is not ideal because of the generated heat, but on rainy days it takes away the chilliness. Twigs are easy to collect and the forest gets cleaned up, helping the picking of blueberries and mushrooms. Collecting twigs is also for children! We use campfire until the end of summertime and move indoors at the time when there are lots of mushrooms to dry.

## Setting up the site for campfire

When the location of the campfire is decided, dig a half-a-meter deep pit and create a circle using big stones around the pit. The stones are placed tightly against each other and the holes can be filled with smaller stones. At the front, there should be an opening. The top of the circle should be as flat as possible because support structure is placed upon it, constructed from surplus metal parts and a metal net, on which the pots and kettles are kept on. If using multiple kettles, the area can be quite big; ours is around half a square meter. A biggish shelter is recommended to be set up near the campfire to store the twigs. Also, a table of some kind is necessary, because of the animals and possible children around. In the shelter the twigs won't get wet and there's always wood to feed the fire with. No unnecessary soot in the air! The kettles will become completely black on the campfire. And so do potholders and fingers when in contact with the kettles. In autumn the kettles can be rubbed clean and fingers are cleaned by washing. There should be a separate set of potholders for indoors use.

## Storing the heat in a campfire pit

Open fire will heat up the kettles fast and parboiling berries can be done nicely. We use to heat up the lunch while heating up the breakfast. When fire has dwindled, the soup and tea kettles are moved on the ashes under the metal net. A wooden lid, for example, can be used on the net and the empty space around the kettles filled with trash textiles or a blanket made from thick textile material. We usually put a large kettle on the lid, containing water heated during the breakfast cooking. Water is kept warm for hours even though it's not under the blanket. And the big stones will keep the lunch warm until it's time to eat it. This way there's no need to start the fire during lunchtime.

### **Fire safety**

Be cautious with fire safety. When selecting a place for the campfire, the type of soil must be considered. If there's dry peat, there is also risk of smouldering, even though the fire might not even spread through the surface. Large and thick stones are good insulators. When the campfire is dug into the ground, the risk posed by sparks is lower because the wind doesn't reach the fire so much. The distance between the wood shelter and the fire should be multiple meter. A water bucket is also a good safety measure.

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