The Rookery
BESPOKE • ARTISAN
WOOD-FIRED PIZZA OVENS

What kind of wood should I use?
The best woods to burn in your Rookery pizza oven are dry, seasoned hardwoods such as oak, maple, ash, beech, and birch. Fruitwoods are also extremely popular for their heat and fragrance, including apple, hickory, almond, cherry, and pear etc.

DO NOT use pine, fir, eucalyptus, or cedar, due to their high resin levels. They leave a hard to remove residue in the oven and an unpleasant taste on your food.

Do not over-fire your oven. Flames spilling out of the oven mouth or excessive temperatures are signs you are over-firing Avoid this!

Can I use my oven in the winter?
Absolutely! The refractory oven core is extremely robust and will not crack in harsh climates. Also, your oven is extremely well insulated. The same premium insulation that keeps the heat in, is also very effective in keeping the cold out, protecting the dome and floor.

Do keep moisture out of your oven in general. (For example, close the door when the oven is not in use to prevent rain and snow from entering. Moisture in the oven will seep into the cooking surface, and when fired, the water will release as excessive steam in the pizza oven. This can lead to a process known as "spalling," that can cause pitting and hairline cracks over time.

The only limiting aspect of winter use is your willingness to stand outside to light it! Once the fire is going, it is quite warm in front of it. In near zero conditions, fire your oven a little more slowly to give it more time to warm up. You will want the open oven mouth to be out of the wind for temperature stability. A blowing wind and cold outdoor temps may mean you will need to adjust your fuel volume and cook times and be willing to experiment a bit.

Why do I have to cure my oven? How do I do it?
When it's cast, your oven contains a high ratio of water to concrete that has to be baked out of the oven. This curing process actually strengthens the dome, when done properly. However, if the oven gets too hot too fast, then water seeks to escape the entire dome's thickness all at once, and can result in damage, including cracking the dome.
Curing is done low and slow — starting at a low temperature and building a series of increasingly larger fires over a 5-day period. Let your fires burn for 6 hours or longer each day. The first-day fire is no more than kindling and thin strips of wood for 300f at the top interior of the dome. Each day, increase the temperature of the oven by 50f until you are at 500f on day 5.
Close the oven door every evening to preserve dryness and heat.
Have patience and enjoy this bonding time with your oven, and it will reward you with many years of wonderful use in return!

How do I maintain my oven?
The Rookery pizza ovens are durable and require very little maintenance. Here are few basic principles to keep your oven functioning at its best.
General: Follow all curing instructions when you receive your oven. Keep water, snow, and rain out of the chimney and chamber going forward. Do not 'throw' wood into the oven, or use inappropriate fuels.
Food: Your oven's very high operating temperatures burn off spilled or stuck-on food, acting in an automatic "self-cleaning" mode. Stubborn food can be removed with a copper oven brush. (Non-dough based foods should always be placed on appropriate cookware prior to cooking.)
Creosote: At least twice a year, inspect the vent and chimney pipe for creosote build up. The oven can be inspected through the door opening when the oven is completely cool. If creosote has accumulated, it should be removed by cleaning the chimneyand cap to reduce the risk of fire.
What is Creosote? Slow burning wood produces tar and other organic vapours that combine with expelled moisture to form creosote. Creosote residue accumulates on the flue lining and can ignite into an extremely hot fire.
Soot: Soot is a natural byproduct of wood fired cooking. Depending on your oven's finish, you can clean the exterior of the oven using warm soapy water and a soft cloth or soft brush. The door should be closed to keep water out of the chamber. (Expect soot to return when you begin using your oven again.) You can reduce soot build up by not over-firing your oven.
Ash: Remove the ashes from your oven before you light a new fire. Old, cold ashes will get in the way of food baking. When first firing, you can brush the ash into the small gap around the edge of the cooking surface, this will help to keep the firebricks in place and will fill with ash over time.