

## HOBO Stoves

Interesting discussion from rec.backcountry on "hobo" stoves ...

Anyone have suggestions for simple, effective, light hobo stoves? This is a new phenomenon to me.

You could whip up an Osborne Stove out of a couple of old coffee cans and a couple of grids. Folds completely flat.

### Buddy Burners:-

A simple and cheap cooking method is the buddy burner (I guess this would be another use for it too?) The is simply a strip of cardboard box rolled up and taped into a short fat cylinder (maybe 1inch high) and soaked in candle wax, paraffin wax, old margarine, diesel, etc, etc.

Alternatively, the whole thing can be made inside an old tuna can, or the tuna can can be filled about 1/8 inch with inflammable stuff, and a paper towel put in as a wick. All variations on a theme.

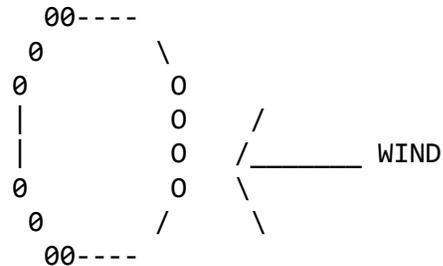
Four 6 inch nails driven into the ground around this make a pan rest.

Or you can use it as a quick and convenient heat source in a hobostove or an Osborne stove.

### The Hobo Stove:-

## Hobo\_Stoves\_2004.txt

Take a gallon paint can (exact size not important - experiment)  
Cut holes in sides of can as below:-



000 = Hole at top of can  
000 = Hole at bottom of can.

Chuck anything combustible in, and sprinkle a couple of drops of petrol in the bottom hole ( Non-lazy buggers can of course do this without petrol!!), and light it up.

The wind blows it the bottom hole, and the aerodynamics of the can suck the exhaust out of the top holes. This forms a vicious thru draught, and the fire burns almost white hot in a strong wind! It also uses very little fuel. Fire temperature can be controlled be turning can away from the wind a bit, or by obstructing the inlet hole.

Put a pan directly on the top of the can without the can lid (unless you are very fussy about carbon deposits on your pan) for maximum heat transfer. Or to bake, put lid on can, and baking receptacle on lid. Alternatively use a large lidded tin, like a biscuit tin, directly on the can, supporting the item to be baked above the

bottom of the tin, so it bakes in the distributed temperature of the tin rather than the direct heat on the base.

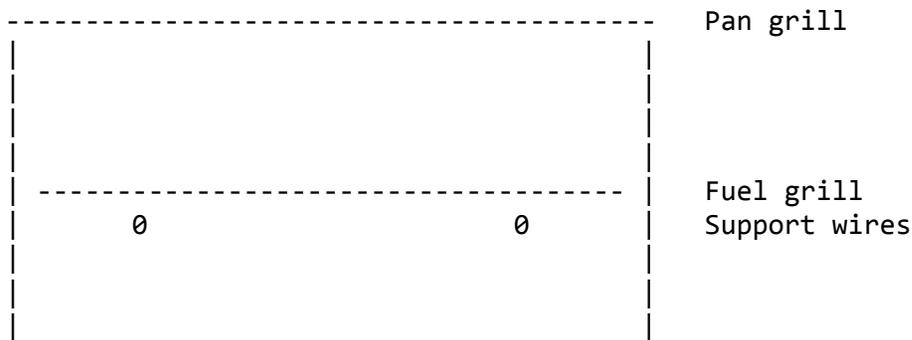
These things are unbelievably effective, dirt-cheap and fun to make. You can easily make one on the fly with a Swiss Army knife and a tin you pick up. You will probably find yourself making lots of different designs just for the hell of it!! They are also useful in that you can burn up your camp rubbish to cook your next meal!

The Osborne stove:-

(Frank Osborne - a motorcycle camper, contributed the source article for this synopsis to an American motorcycle magazine)

This is made from 4 sheets of metal (scrap alloy, drink cans flattened, etc) wired together at the corners to form a square or rectangle. About 7 inches across by 5 inches deep is fine, but can be varied ad nauseam. A couple of grills are added as below:-

A side cutaway would be:-



## Hobo\_Stoves\_2004.txt

The fuel grill is supported about 2-3 ins from the top of the stove on a couple of wires thru holes drilled in two opposite sides of the stove.

Charcoal fired up on here gives a long lasting fire suitable for the camp. Wood and/or paper gives a quick fire suitable for trail brewups. The airflow under the grill gives very efficient combustion.

With charcoal as fuel, burgers etc can just be placed straight on the pan grill and barbecued direct.

The whole thing folds flat for carrying.

Comparison of stoves:-

Special thanks to Joe Erlich for including (with the mountain of useful literature!) plans for an Osborne stove (and to Frank Osborne for designing it...). I got time to try it out last weekend.

I made mine out of scrap aluminum, slightly modified from the standard plan, to form a square of 7inch base and 5inch height. Also, I only hinged 3 of the four corners, so the stove wall was not a floppy parallelogram, but a floppy strip. The square construction allows it to pack smaller (longest side only rather than longest+shortest), and the floppy strip idea allows it to be used as a variable geometry portable firepit as well as a classic Osborne (of which more later).

The Osborne, running on half a fill of charcoal (about 10p [10cents]) ran for 2 hours. It took 15minutes to fire up properly after priming with a capful of meths, and the total E.T. to boil 1pt of water was 20 minutes. The next pint took 8 minutes with the stove already fired up. The idea of only hinging 3 sides gives you a flap with

which you can open or close to alter the windflow thru the stove. I expect to be able to reduce the above times considerable when I can play with this effectively.

So the Osborne is a great stove for the camp. You set it going with a charge of charcoal and it'll run all evening. (This is really convenient for purifying all tomorrow's water from tonight's spring.....)

But the fire up time makes it useless running charcoal for a brew up by the trail. This is where the flexible firepit idea comes in. Just bend the strip into a shape you can put your pan on,

chuck in anything combustibile and you have a 5minute brewup. However, a hobo stove is better for this

So. An Osborne is great in camp, but less so for brewups. It can do the latter but is less effective than a hobostove. The hobostove, however doesn't burn charcoal as efficiently as the Osborne.

An Osborne packs flat and is very easily carried. A hobo doesn't, so you have to either pack it with stuff inside, or tie it to the outside of your sac.

An Osborne needs construction in advance and needs a couple of items which will need to be looked for (grills, grill supports) and requires basic tools. The hobo can be knocked up out of any reasonably sized scrap tin in a couple of minutes with just a knife.

Both are excellent little things, as effective (at least!) as a commercial stove, and cost next to nothing. They both do similar jobs but with slight differences in effectiveness. I reckon its

Hobo\_Stoves\_2004.txt

worth playing with both and deciding which suits you best. I shall carry an Osborne if I am camping out for a few nights, and use a hobo on day trips.

Both are fun.