



Build Your Own Earth Oven: A Low-Cost Wood-Fired Mud Oven, Simple Sourdough Bread, Perfect Loaves

Kiko Denzer

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Earth ovens combine the utility of a wood-fired, retained-heat oven with the ease and timeless beauty of earthen construction. Building one will appeal to bakers, builders, and beginners of all kinds, from: the serious or aspiring baker who wants the best low-cost bread oven, to gardeners who want a centerpiece for a beautiful outdoor kitchen, to outdoor chefs, to creative people interested in low-cost materials and simple technology, to teachers who want a multi-faceted, experiential project for students of all ages (the book has been successful with everyone from third-graders to adults). "Build Your Own Earth Oven" is fully illustrated with step-by-step directions, including how to tend the fire, and how to make perfect sourdough hearth loaves in the artisan tradition. The average do-it-yourselfer with a few tools and a scrap pile can build an oven for free, or close to it. Otherwise, \$30 should cover all your materials--less than the price of a fancy "baking stone." Good building soil is often right in your back yard, under your feet. Build the simplest oven in a day! With a bit more time and imagination, you can make a permanent foundation and a fire-breathing dragon-oven or any other shape you can dream up. Earth ovens are familiar to many that have seen a southwestern "horno" or a European "bee-hive" oven. The idea (pioneered by Egyptian bakers in the second millennium bc!) is simplicity itself: fill the oven with wood, light a fire, and let it burn down to ashes. The dense, 3- to 12-inch-thick earthen walls hold and store the heat of the fire, the baker sweeps the floor clean, and the hot oven walls radiate steady, intense heat for hours. Home bakers who can't afford a fancy, steam-injected bread oven will be delighted to find that a simple earth oven can produce loaves to equal the fanciest "artisan" bakery. It also makes delicious roast meats, cakes, pies, pizzas, and other creations. Pizza cooks to perfection in three minutes or less. Vegetables, herbs, and potatoes drizzled with olive oil roast up in minutes for a simple, elegant, and delicious meal. Efficient cooks will find the residual heat useful for slow-baked dishes, and even for drying surplus produce, or incubating homemade yogurt.

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From Reader Review Build Your Own Earth Oven: A Low-Cost Wood-Fired Mud Oven, Simple Sourdough Bread, Perfect Loaves for online ebook

Dave says

I built one two years ago using this book as a guide. Lots of fun playing in the mud with my kids ensued. In use, it takes some practice to get the temperature right for bread, but you can use it right from the beginning for the best pizza you will ever have. Made pizza's for a work party, they cooked in only 90 seconds! most people spent more time building the pizza than it took to cook one.

If you want to have a very cool conversation piece in your backyard, go for it!

Matt says

The only book you'll need to build yourself an oven, and just possibly become one with nature in the process. Delightful and useful.

John Keller says

The perfect and definitive reference/"how-to" for cob ovens. If you have ever thought of building your own, make sure you get this and read it first.

Charlie says

A very well done "how to..." if you ever get the urge to build your own wood-fired oven literally from the dirt on your own property... though probably not for sub-urbanites. :)

Sarah says

add it to the pile of references for whenever i finally get to build one.

Kristen Gurri says

Great book/concept. We have built small practice ovens and the kids have loved it. If you need things spelled out in measurements and precise line by line instructions this book will frustrate you a bit. I really liked the way it encourages you to learn by your own experience and guides you through the trial and error stages. I

agree with other reviews - a practical sized earth oven is the work of several casual weekend projects. Gather materials, build the base, build the oven, insulate. Much more relaxed and realistic to spread it out over a few Saturdays. But then again I have small kids and don't get to do anything linearly.

Christina says

This book is awesome!!! I especially love Denzer's comments about bread and art. The last couple pages of the book were so powerful. He articulates so well the magic of bread-especially one made with love and a earth.

Toby says

Learning to build and fire an earth oven is a fascinating project. This is *the* book that you must have if you want to do it. Be careful to get the most recent edition since a lot of new information has been added over time. One caution on this though... the earlier editions had simpler, easier to build oven plans. Those plans are legitimate and they do work. You should not get caught up in a complicated design (unless you enjoy that), but should focus on the amazing fact that you can build an oven in a few hours.[return][return]I think that everyone should build an earthen oven at least once in their life. It gives you a greater appreciation for how highly complicated we have become. It is amazing that you can build a working oven with just a bit of mud and some rocks! You'll have a better connection to your food and your survival if you have done this at least once!

Pzikmanis says

This is a true Hippie book. Essentially how to build a functioning wood oven from dirt and junk in your backyard.

Kyle says

The book itself contains much useful and encouraging information on constructing your own adobe oven in a variety of circumstances. The bread section is pretty crude, however, to the point that its pages would have been much better spent providing more information on oven construction.

Lisa says

I built an earth oven using these using instructions in the book. Three years out it is still holding up to the weather. Word of warning though, be sure if you do decide to build one you have easy access to the opening. Ours is really low to the ground and I haven't used it as much as I'd like because of having to kneel down all the time. It would have been better to have it raised on a higher platform of rocks or a solid mount of dirt. It's

a really great way to bake, though, and even store bought frozen dough ends up making amazing bread in a wood fired oven. There's a new edition of the book out.

Jack Stephens says

Kiko Denzer's gifts as an artist and teacher shine in this book. Building an earthen oven is the perfect project to satisfy many desires to be useful, creative and healthy, and "Build Your Own Earth Oven" speaks to those desires eloquently and practically. With Kiko as a guide you can make something that is fun, useful, artful, cheap, practical and beautiful. And then, thanks to Hannah Field's expertise as a baker, you can enjoy delicious and healthy artisan breads, and so much more.

I especially enjoyed the simple explanations of the physics of building with mud and baking in earth. The numerous illustrations beautifully support the clear instructions on building and finishing an oven, and the thorough and practical advice about using the oven well, troubleshooting and baking make this book a very useful tool.

As a natural builder I've found that building an earthen oven is the ideal first project to gain experience, insight and enthusiasm for the beauty and benefits of building with natural materials. If you use the lessons offered in "Build Your Own Earth Oven" you just might realize the innate wisdom you already possess as a human being - engaging your hands, heart and head to create, to engage life, to do something useful. Or, as Kiko has also wisely pointed out, you can "...just make a mud oven so you can bake your own bread."

Beatifully illustrated, well-written and immensely useful, I heartily recommend this book.

Micki says

Oh, I read this book in the wrong season! The ground is frozen, and there's no way I can easily build an earth oven to try out the fun stuff in the book! But maybe in the spring!

This is a hopeful kind of book, of the "Mother Earth News" hippie genre of books, where the author tells the reader, "yes, you too can do this traditional craft/art." (-: I have a feeling it will be more trouble than it's worth, but come spring, I plan to try making my own pizza oven.

The writing is zesty and bubbly, and the instructions seem quite clear and do-able.

Edwin Whiting says

Awesome read. Learn the simple way one can build a wood fired oven out of mud. You get to play in the mud and learn at the same time: what could be better :) :)

Lin says

This inspired me to make my own wood-fired oven from recycled materials and clay. Currently I am building the foundation. You can finish this in a weekend (once you have all the supplies assembled), but I've set the modest goal of one-month for this project.
