

# Cast Iron Restoration Reference Card

## Is This Piece Restorable?

### Cracks

Hold up to light; run your thumb along the outer wall and handle. Hairline fractures from drops or thermal shock are invisible until they're not. A cracked piece is not safe over heat.

### Warping

Set flat on a surface and press the base. Should not move. A rocking base will cook unevenly on a modern cooktop, no matter how good the seasoning.

### Wall Thickness

Pre-1960s cast iron has thicker, smoother walls, better heat retention, and longer life. Walls that feel paper thin or show visible wear-through are a concern.

## What Kind of Rust Is It?

### Light / Surface Rust

- Orange or reddish surface discoloration
- No visible pitting or rough texture
- Color partially wipes with a dry rag
- Stored, forgotten, or inherited pans

**Treatment: Steps 1–2 may suffice. Still do the Coke soak.**

### Heavy / Deep Rust

- Thick, flaking, or layered rust
- Rough, pitted surface texture
- Old carbon buildup underneath
- Thrift store, garage sale, barn finds

**Treatment: Full 5-step method. May need 2 Coke soaks. It almost certainly isn't too far gone.**

# Cast Iron Restoration Reference Card

## Supplies Checklist

- Coca-Cola (regular)  
*1-2 liters, enough to fill + saturate exterior*
- White Distilled Vinegar  
*Standard 5% acidity*
- Baking Soda  
*For paste scrub and post-soak neutralizing*
- Steel Wool / Scrubbing Pad  
*Coarse grade*
- Cheesecloth or Paper Towels  
*Enough to wrap the full exterior*
- Rubber Gloves  
*Trust me, you'll want them*
- Baking Tray + Old Towel  
*Protect your counters*
- High Smoke-Point Oil  
*Avocado, flaxseed, or Crisco*
- Lint-free rags  
*Ones that you don't mind retiring to cast iron duty*

## The Initial Scrub

Fill the piece with warm water and dish soap, then scrub interior and exterior in circular motions with steel wool and rubber gloves until the residue lightens. Rinse and move immediately to Step 2 – bare wet iron will flash-rust.

## Baking Soda & Vinegar

Sprinkle baking soda over the wet surface, add a splash of white vinegar, and scrub the fizzing paste into the interior and exterior with steel wool. Rinse well – some rust may remain, and that's what the Coke soak is for.

## The Coke Soak

Line a baking tray with cheesecloth, fill the interior with Coke, and wrap the exterior in Coke-saturated cloth so every surface is in contact. Cover loosely and leave 8–12 hours – the liquid will be dark and foamy by morning.

## Final Rinse & Scrub

Scrub all surfaces under warm running water with fresh steel wool – post-Coke rust lifts easily – then rinse off all residue. Dry immediately and completely; place on a low burner for five minutes before moving to seasoning.

## Re-Season (× 3–4)

Apply a very thin coat of oil to every surface, wipe almost all of it off, then bake upside-down at 450–500°F for one hour and cool completely in the oven. Repeat three to four times total.