

Bamboo Rice Cooker

by Bob Gillis, Adam Zwicker, and Dino Labiste

Bamboo is an ancient plant that has been utilized in countries like India, China, Vietnam, Borneo, Philippines and many other cultures in the East and Southeast Asia for centuries. Its uses are numerous from housing material, fuel, baskets, ropes, boats, tools, food, musical instruments to furniture. Bamboo is much less known in the West and its importance as a versatile resource is often overlooked.

One of the uses for bamboo was creating a simple cooking implement that allowed you to boil rice. The following photos take you through the process of using the bamboo as a rice cooker. Ideally, you want to use a species of bamboo that has a thick wall, large diameter, and long sections between the nodes. The species that was used in the demonstration was commonly called Giant Timber Bamboo (*Phyllostachys bambusoides*). The interior diameter was 2 1/2 inches. The length was 12 inches. A section of the bamboo was cut with the closed node on one end and a open section on the other end.



First, you will need to gather a banana leaf from a banana plant.



Place the rice kernels on the banana leaf.



Wrap the rice in the banana leaf creating a tubular bundle.



Stuff the banana leaf bundle into the open end of the bamboo and fill the entire chamber with water.



Place the bamboo upright in hot ashes or coals.



The fire will begin to heat up the bottom end of the bamboo.



As the bamboo begins to heat up, the water will start to boil.



When the rice is ready, take the bamboo out of the fire and split the chamber to remove the banana leaf bundle.



Unwrap the steaming rice from the banana leaf bundle. Create a pair of chopsticks from the bamboo and have yourself a nutritious meal. The banana leaf imparts a mild, sweet taste to the rice.



If you do not have access to banana leaves, you can split the bamboo lengthwise and stuff the chamber with rice. NOTE: *If you split the bamboo further up towards the top, instead of in the middle, the split, bottom chamber will hold more water for the cooking process.* When cutting the bamboo for this procedure, be sure to include the closed nodes on both ends. Fill the chamber with water and tie the two halves with thin bamboo splits. Place the bamboo lengthwise on the coals and let the water boil.



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