

Chapter 1: Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of Kamado cooking.

Throughout history, many cultures have developed variations on the clay or brick oven, including the *tandoor* of India, the adobe *horno* of the Native American Southwest, and the brick bread ovens that helped make French bread. . .well, French bread, and of course the clay cooking vessels of Japan from which the Kamado is derived. Once you've fired up your Kamado and tasted the results, you'll see why the concept of heating a large mass of clay (or, in the case of the Kamado, a high tech ceramic) and using the radiated heat to cook keeps reappearing across continents and cultures.

The Kamado is this timeless tradition brought forward to the 21st century. The Kamado is a barbecue clay cooker and smoker of remarkable capability and versatility. You can smoke, bake, and broil in a Kamado, working over a range of temperatures that is far greater than what can be achieved and sustained with any backyard barbecue. You can smoke fresh salmon or beef jerky at 170 degrees for a full day, then turn around and use the Kamado to grill a steak at 600 degrees (or higher!), achieving in a few moments what it would cost you a king's ransom to purchase at one of the nationally-known elite steak houses.

In fact, we almost hate to refer to the Kamado as a "barbecue," because for most people that term doesn't begin to tell the true tale. The Kamado cooking experience is very different from what you have been used to on a conventional barbecue. The Kamado is a different and better way of cooking. The results are simply superior.

The Kamado isn't just a cooking vessel. It's a community. Through our website (Kamado.com) you have the opportunity to benefit from the shared knowledge and experience of Kamado users throughout the world. Whether you want operational tips, recipes that work, or reassurance that you're doing it "right," a remarkably helpful and active community of K users (as well as the Kamado staff) stands ready and willing to assist. In fact, the manual you are reading was in large part written and edited by the Kamado online community. Whether you're wondering "Why did it do that?" or "How do I do that?" the answer is just a seconds away.

Cooking with a Kamado is fun! Once the food starts coming out of your Kamado, you will suddenly have a lot of new best friends. Share the wealth, then encourage everyone to join get in on the fun by getting their own Kamado.

It takes a little bit of effort and attention to gain full command of this powerful cooking tool, but the investment of time will be well worth it. You will find the Kamado surprisingly flexible and forgiving. Even "mistakes" taste good! This manual will guide you through the process of getting your new Kamado set up, and cooking your first few meals. You will also learn about basic Kamado care, and proper use of the Kamado accessories you may have purchased.

Computer people, engineers, doctors, and lawyers all have their own "language." Their jargon is a shorthand way of referring to certain frequently-discussed concepts, or a means of conveying in a few words what it would otherwise take a lot more nouns and verbs to describe. The Kamado community, of which you are now a member, has its shorthand references, too. Here are a few of the terms you will see as you make your way around this new territory.

K—A Kamado cooker. "Put it in the K for an hour at 350." Can also be used as a verb, as in "I K'd a chicken."

7 or #7—Refers to a particular model of Kamado. The current model numbers are 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 (odd, isn't it?) and soon in a backyard near you, an 11. The size and grill capacity (and weight) go up with the number. "Just unpacked my #7." Also used in combination with K, as in "My K7 arrived yesterday."

Spatchcock—A very popular method of preparing poultry for the K. Kitchen shears are used to cut along both sides of the backbone, and remove it. The bird is then turned over and spread flat on the grill, enabling it to be cooked more quickly and retain even more flavor and juice. Spatchcocking has been used on birds up to and including a turkey. Anything larger is probably extinct, or should be. For details, see www.nakedwhiz.com/spatch.htm. Usually used as a verb. For example, "I spatchcocked a chicken last night."

Lump—Lump charcoal (*not* briquettes) is the preferred fuel of most K owners. Lump charcoal is pieces of wood that have been converted to charcoal, but are otherwise unprocessed. Briquettes, by contrast, are charcoal powder (and sometimes other additives) that is formed into shape and pressed. You didn't think they grew on trees, all identical, did you? Lump varies greatly in its quality, heating capacity, and the consistency of size of the lumps. The ideal is charcoal consisting entirely of medium and large lumps, with little or no dust and tiny pieces. The latter, referred to as "fines," are considered useless waste and a nuisance since they contribute mess but no heat, and clog the air holes in the ceramic grate.

Klump—The term by which we usually refer to the Kamado Company's brand of lump charcoal, which is made from the tamarind tree and imported from Indonesia. Klump is valued for its heat yield, its even-burning qualities, and the fact that it contains virtually no fines.

Damper—The "spinner" or "top hat" that sits atop your K. The damper controls the outflow of air from the cooking chamber. The damper and draft door (at the bottom of the firebox) are the two tools with which you control airflow and thus temperature in your K.

Draft door—The door at the bottom front of the Kamado, through which air is drawn into the Kamado, through the charcoal in the firebox, and up and out via the damper.

Lumpsaver/Lumpsaver Plus (LS, LS+)—The Lumpsaver was devised by Richard Johnson, creator of the Kamado, as a means of dealing with the problem of "fines," or charcoal dust that would clog the ceramic grate through which air needed to flow. The original Lumpsaver is no longer offered. It was replaced by the LumpsaverPlus, which has a wire bottom to hold the charcoal above the grate. The LumpsaverPlus can be used with or without the ceramic grate in place. The LumpsaverPlus with Flue is an option for use *only* with the gas burner version of the Kamado. The LumpsaverPlus with Flue can *not* be used with the ceramic grate in place. The LumpsaverPlus (with or without flue) is often referred to simply as the "LS."

Low and Slow (lo 'n' slo, LNS)—Cooking foods at relatively low temperature (around 200-255 degrees) for long periods of time (10-24 hours). Generally used for tougher or larger cuts of meat, as well as for smoking.

Dwell—Extinguishing the burning charcoal, by closing both dampers, while allowing the food to remain in the closed Kamado for a (generally fairly short) period of time. The food continues cooking, although at a somewhat lower temperature and slower rate. This technique is usually used when cooking a steak at a very high temperature (>500 degrees), where the Kamado

is heated quickly to that temperature, the steak cooked for a few minutes on each side, then "dwelled" for several minutes. Because the thermal mass of the K has not had time to absorb a lot of heat, the temperature drops fairly rapidly.

Brining—The use of a salt or sugar-and-salt soak on meat for several hours (often overnight) prior to grilling. Helps to make many cuts of meat juicier and more tender.

Direct/Indirect—Cooking on a Kamado can be *direct*, in which the food is placed on a grill set directly above the burning charcoal, or *indirect*, in which a pizza stone wrapped in aluminum foil or other form of heat deflector (such as an aluminum drip pan) is set above the charcoal and used to shield the food from the direct heat source. You will find a wide range of opinions on what should or shouldn't be cooked direct or indirect, which is how you discover that on a K there is almost always more than one "right" way to do things.

Polder—A company that makes thermometers, but often used generically to refer to various brands of remote thermometers. These allow you to place one or more probes in the meat and/or the dome of the K, then monitor the temperature on a separate unit you carry with you so you'll know when dinner is done.

First Light—The first fire you build in your new K! A very exciting event.

Now that your basic vocabulary is in place, you're ready to join the world of Kamado cookery. Congratulations, and welcome.