

Cooking... with your car

by [trebuchet03](#) on June 21, 2006

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intro: Cooking... with your car

Reusing some waste heat in from your engine bay to cook a meal on your way home.

After I showed this to a few people, I found out that there is a book called "Manifold Destiny" on this very subject. I have not read it yet, but I'm told that there are quite a few recipe's with locations and times (miles).



step 1: Gather Some Ingredients

This was mostly improvised... But on my menu:

- +Baked Chicken and Herbs (chicken breast, flour, your choice of herbs - I used mostly basil)
- +Italian Chicken (chicken breast marinated in zesty Italian salad dressing cooked with pepper and onion)
- +Red and Green Peppers and mushroom Noodles (used noodles from a ramen package, added a little EVOO, and cooked in vegetable stock)
- +Baked Potato Pieces (salted with a little cooking oil)
- +Baked Apples (sliced in half with a pat of butter and scoop of brown sugar)



step 2: Prepare

Layout each item on foil sheets large enough to wrap.

The chicken breasts will be cooked in rectangular like packets to expose as much surface as possible. We want a cup like shape for the noodles/veggies.



step 3: Sealing

Everything should be wrapped in a few layers of foil. Not so much to protect the food from anything, but really to protect the car from spillage.

The noodles require a little extra care. As we're adding fluid (veggie stock), we need to make out 'cup' with a sealable opening. However you feel is best is the way to go here ;)

On the note of toxic gasses (I'm asked this all the time)

If your car is emitting gasses (say exhaust or coolant steam) from under the hood, you have a problem and you should probably have that looked at. A maintained car does not do this which is why I'm not concerned with doing this.



Image Notes

1. A marker is great to figure out what's inside ;)
2. added stock, then twisted. This caused some spacing issues under the hood -- but the foil could be bent easily ;)
3. I am oddly proud that I never ate a package of ramen noodles that year of college... This package was in the pantry for a long while :P

Image Notes

1. Tightly sealed with the seam on one side (top). You don't need to squeeze all of the air out either.

step 4: Placement

Placing your food is very important... As every car and engine configuration is different, you'll need to use some common sense...

Potato and Chicken will require the most heat so they should be placed on or near the exhaust manifold. Apples should be placed near something hot (I put it on the top radiator hose). The noodles can be placed on top of the valve cover (if possible) as they can take lower heat for longer times and still cook properly.



Image Notes

1. room for 1 chicken packet. It was wedged between the exhaust manifold heat shield, a hoist eye and the PS pump bracket.....Just find a spot to stick it so that it won't fall out ;)

step 5: Cook Time

I was driving 200 miles, so I had to plan accordingly. I drove 100 miles (speed was around 70-80mph) and nearly overcooked the chicken. But at that rest stop I had 1 chicken breast and it was delicious. When I came to a stop, the smell of the chicken and herbs surrounded the car. And at the horror of onlookers, I proceeded to eat from my engine bay.

After the 100 miles, the chicken was well browned -- I think 60 miles would have done the trick.

At this time, the noodles were done, and were moved to a slightly cooler area. The potato package was still raw as I had placed it in an area too cool to cook properly.



Image Notes

1. It was very hot... So some sort of pot mitt or towel will be needed ;)





step 6: Other Suggestions

Shrimp is VERY easy to cook and gives of a wonderful aroma. Only 20-30 miles on surface roads is needed -- but modify for extended periods stuck in traffic.

On my next long trip, I'd love to make a rack to support a pork roast or even a rack of ribs to cook slowly.

This type of cooking requires some practice and experimentation. But what's better than pulling up to a gas station and pulling out some chicken wings from under the hood while you fuel up?

Drinks! The striker plate (the part that holds the door closed) on most cars is a great glass bottle opener should you find yourself in the middle of nowhere with a coke and no bottle opener :) Just look inside the door frame for something that resembles a bottle opener.

BTW, this is a '97 Mazda 626 -- equipped with bottle opener and oscillating vents (for some goofy reason) :P



Image Notes

1. again, sorry 'bout the crazy hairness :Pthat's about 6 mo. without a haircut :P
2. eh.. wires... now loomed. No, its not some stupid 'rice' garbage... Its for the hood light I installed to make working in the evening much easier :P
3. I don't care if he had a jet engine hidden in his anus...

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Comments

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blugyblug says:

"And at the horror of onlookers, I proceeded to eat from my engine bay."

AWESOME.

Dec 26, 2008. 11:06 PM [REPLY](#)



blugyblug says:

Scaring people with weird things is always funny.

Dec 26, 2008. 11:07 PM [REPLY](#)



Patrik says:

This feels like a good place to mention Laurie Anderson's recipe for...

HOTEL HOT DOGS

Ingredients: 2 Bratwurst (or Oscar Mayers, depending on the continent)

1 Lamp

1 Set wire cutters

Unplug lamp. Using wire cutters, cut into the lamp cord about a foot from the plug end. Strip all insulation off cord. Run wire through hot dogs. Plug in lamp. Cook for 2 seconds (at 220V -- 4 sec. if in the U.S. where it's 110). Be careful not to overcook, or your hot dogs will explode. Unplug lamp and eat. Serves one.

Dec 11, 2007. 9:25 PM [REPLY](#)



Patrik says:

Heh - here's a nice almost-instructable:

Cooking hot dogs via electrocution

They embellished it a little, by sticking LEDs into the hotdog while it's plugged in! :-D

Dec 11, 2007. 9:33 PM [REPLY](#)



amin_misran says:
NICE yummy!~

Nov 9, 2008. 7:46 AM [REPLY](#)



thubernooob says:

OK, no ones mentioned it so I have to ask!
How much food have you guys lost that has fallen out when hitting bumps, etc.

Sep 23, 2008. 2:07 PM [REPLY](#)



Gort says:

I used to work at a place where we dyno big diesel engines. We used to put baking potatoes and steak in wraps of tinfoil with what ever else we wanted on it and lay it on the manifolds. Those manifolds are much different and larger than you will see in a car so we could put lunch for the crew on a V-12 and after a 1/2 hour dyno run ...yummy..hey that is increasing efficiency as we did not have to use energy to run the stove at lunch..lol

Aug 10, 2008. 11:34 AM [REPLY](#)



pdub420 says:

my roommate and i used to do this in college. we'd make hamburger patties stuffed with cheese and onions, wrap them in bacon, add some potatoes and corn or whatever we had on hand and go for a nice long drive on the back roads of southern indiana. some very good times.

Jul 16, 2008. 8:37 PM [REPLY](#)

when travelling, having a hot meal after a long time on the road is just nice in general. not to mention the fact that it's cheaper than a restaurant, and helps the planet by using some of that extra energy being generated.



Esmagamus says:

Better still, get a nice fish, don't gut it, spread olive oil, coarse salt and a bit of fresh garlic and parsley. Put it in the engine and stop when it smells done.

Aug 5, 2008. 3:25 PM [REPLY](#)



incorrigible packrat says:

I'd always entertained the notion of cutting a hole in the floor of my old Chev van and having somebody back there, grilling stuff on top of the car, whilst hurtling down the road. Sadly, high gas prices, a crapped-out alternator, and lack of a personal chef, have conspired to prevent the realization of this dream...

May 7, 2008. 6:10 PM [REPLY](#)



Esmagamus says:

Do it like a construction worker I heard about. He borrowed a spotlight from a electrician, tilted it up, put the lunch box on it and heated his lunch right there on the construction site.

Aug 5, 2008. 3:12 PM [REPLY](#)



Esmagamus says:


I loved it! I first heard of this way of cooking in a documentary about the WWII willys jeep, that had a grid to put two cans of ration. Of course, once in a while someone would forget to poke a hole in the can and then got a nice coat of baked beans on the engine, great to protect from moisture and bullet damage.

Aug 5, 2008. 3:01 PM [REPLY](#)

About drinks, I have used as a bottle opener:


- tape
- shoelaces
- maths book
- stones
- cheese graters
- keys
- screwdrivers
- paper
- other bottles
- incense holders
- pocket knives
- pliers
- can't remember!

Anyway, there's no reason to damage your car. Be creative, like you were with this instructable.

 **AncientWays** says: Jun 12, 2008. 11:57 AM [REPLY](#)
I've been really wanting to try this. I looked at my engine with the guys from work and we are not sure where a good spot would be on my car. I have a 1994 Jeep Cherokee Sport, 4L/ 6 Cyl. engine. Please advise! Also...let me know if you need a photo of the engine.


 **fatray** says: Jun 10, 2008. 7:20 AM [REPLY](#)
Mazdaspeed, lol.


 **buhdieboy** says: Nov 18, 2007. 7:05 PM [REPLY](#)
i have a copy of manifold destiny would it be worth anything? my screenname on yahoo connects lucky?\$\$ for info


 **unidyne** says: Apr 30, 2008. 4:35 PM [REPLY](#)
"Manifold Destiny", first published in 1989, is long out of print. Used copies on Amazon run between \$50 to \$240. A second version was published in 1998. According to an entry for the book on Wikipedia, "A third edition is tentatively going to print." I wonder if they will have information on cooking with Hybrids.

 **evanthehunter** says: Apr 27, 2008. 6:19 PM [REPLY](#)
ha, sweet. I am gonna try this next year when im 16 :).


 **ivanbg** says: Apr 20, 2008. 11:49 AM [REPLY](#)
Do you think that the engine of a prius gets hot enough?


 **Nachoman** says: Mar 3, 2008. 2:51 PM [REPLY](#)
Quite cool. I'd love to try it, but I barely ever drive more than twenty minutes straight, which wouldn't warm anything. However, I've got a friend who operates 16-ton busses on regional routes, and I bet he'll enjoy the idea of a warm meal after a two-hour drive.

 **Adrian monk** says: May 14, 2007. 12:57 PM [REPLY](#)
AWESOME!!!
Just one question though...would it completely wreck the engine and other stuff in there if all of the food spilled?

 **Danish M1Garand** says: Jan 24, 2008. 10:35 AM [REPLY](#)
Not really, I forgot to open a can of soup before heating it. The resultant steam opened it quite forcefully.....DOH!
I washed off the engine compartment with a water hose and No Harm No Foul.

 **Adrian monk** says: Jan 29, 2008. 9:32 AM [REPLY](#)
Sweet!
I gotta try this...

 **Danish M1Garand** says: Jan 24, 2008. 10:32 AM [REPLY](#)
When I was a Lineman for the phone company we had a truck with a turbo. The manifold had a flat spot right before the turbo. We used the truck to pull in cable so it ran hard while not moving. I would bring a leftover piece of steak, green peppers, onions and potatoes in heavy duty foil.
After about 45 minutes the veggies were steaming hot as was the steak. My coworkers eating Baloney and Cheese were green with envy. Cans of Chunky soup worked too, jut lift the tab so it didn't explode.

 **twocvbloke** says: Jan 8, 2008. 1:44 PM [REPLY](#)
I'd love to try this on a 2CV 602cc engine, there's 2 heat exchangers under the bonnet just begging to cook something!!! :D
I'm sure once I get one I would be a bit of an oddity pulling tinfoil packages out and eating the contents!!! :D

 **alpharex** says: Nov 22, 2007. 9:31 PM [REPLY](#)
lol



multiplecats says:

Nov 10, 2007. 10:27 PM [REPLY](#)

This is gonna be hard to do on the engine of an old Type 1 VW Bug. :)



LiLyDo says:

Nov 4, 2007. 6:44 PM [REPLY](#)

I love this! I've made hamburgers several times on my civic. Shape patties, season, wrap in foil and a couple hours down the road... Lunch!!! I spread the buns w/mayo, slice of cheese, onions.. the way we like 'em, wrap 'em in plastic and pop in the ice chest with our drinks. I've also warmed leftovers, ie: breakfast burritos, pizza, etc... My husband and I try to be frugal and like to pack food for road trips. Having a hot meal that is better than any drive thru makes being "cheap" not a bad thing at all. The funny thing is, people never believe me when I tell them I've cooked on my car's engine!



ChaosJile119 says:

Nov 2, 2007. 2:25 PM [REPLY](#)

I have a 26 model T and I just bought a cooker that slides on the manifold, and works like a Dutch oven. They need to make such a thing for modern cars.



hitokiri_808 says:

Oct 29, 2007. 7:03 AM [REPLY](#)

I heated up some cold fried chicken on my exhaust manifold once. Always been meaning to actually cook something under there.



noahh says:

Oct 19, 2007. 11:41 PM [REPLY](#)

A while ago I tried to buy manifold destiny. But since it is out of print it is REALLY expensive. I have made popcorn on the engine before.



Vendigroth says:

Sep 28, 2007. 2:03 PM [REPLY](#)

Yum.



Uthman says:
ROFL AWESOME

Sep 14, 2007. 3:15 PM [REPLY](#)



descartez says:

May 10, 2007. 10:56 PM [REPLY](#)

Genius sir, pure genius. however, if you spill, you have a heck of a mess to clean up. I wonder if this will work with my honda civic. its a hybrid, so it would be interesting to see.



uberchoob says:

Sep 4, 2007. 10:28 AM [REPLY](#)

I'd be VERY careful. I've got a mechanic friend that's certified for hybrids and he tells me horror stories about car owners who popped the hood. Lot's-a-voltage!

Good Luck!



trebuchet03 says:

May 10, 2007. 11:16 PM [REPLY](#)

I imagine there's some rather hot spots on your civic hybrid ;) If you do any regular highway driving, I imagine the ICE is always on ;) I think engine bay space might be a problem :p



descartez says:

May 11, 2007. 1:53 AM [REPLY](#)

i looked under the hood now. ya, its very tight, i'll figure something out.



mogui says:

Aug 18, 2007. 6:58 PM [REPLY](#)

Oven cooking bags work great and there is less chance of leakage. Search thrift stores for odd aluminum pots that will fit the spaces in your engine compartment. Then put the food in the cooking bag and the bag in the pot. Any slow cooker recipe works with this method.



mhcomp says:

Aug 9, 2007. 3:54 PM [REPLY](#)

I hate to be a party pooper but I heated things on the manifold of cars 50 years ago. Worked great then and I guess it still works great!



trebuchet03 says:

Aug 14, 2007. 12:33 AM [REPLY](#)

Not a pooper at all :D Although, I have discovered the newer designs of putting the exhaust manifold pointing to the rear of the car is a bit more difficult to cook on :p



Dont blame me if Im wrong says:

Aug 12, 2007. 6:07 PM [REPLY](#)

"Drinks! The striker plate (the part that holds the door closed) on most cars is a great glass bottle opener should you find yourself in the middle of nowhere with a coke and no bottle opener ;) Just look inside the door frame for something that resembles a bottle opener."

my dad says you can open a glass bottle with just about anything so your finding is no surprise for me



trebuchet03 says:

Aug 14, 2007. 12:30 AM [REPLY](#)

my dad says you can open a glass bottle with just about anything so your finding is no surprise for me

This is true, it's just a matter of comfort. My door clip was shaped perfectly to open up a bottle cap without any effort. I've opened bottles on the site of cheap tables before - which works as long as you don't mind banging your hand into the edge of the bottle cap and potentially damaging your table ;)



Dont blame me if Im wrong says:

Aug 12, 2007. 6:11 PM [REPLY](#)

another thing **I DONT WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE JET ENGINE AETHER**
also you need a haircut



trebuchet03 says:

Aug 14, 2007. 12:31 AM [REPLY](#)

also you need a haircut

Indeed - but my lady friend doesn't mind too much, she's only bothered by a prickly mustache (therefore, no rush to pay someone to cut growing hair for me) :p



calvinexpress says:

Dec 26, 2008. 10:43 PM [REPLY](#)

Does cooking on the car engine make the food smell like gasoline?



trebuchet03 says:

Dec 27, 2008. 10:06 AM [REPLY](#)

Only if your car has a terrible terrible gasoline leak in the engine bay....



Breckrider says:

May 26, 2007. 8:26 AM [REPLY](#)

You can also cook things by strapping them to the muffler. I've done this on long motorcycle rides for years. Just use several layers of foil and I use the adjustable metal straps that screw tighten.



TheSaneOne says:

Feb 8, 2007. 3:06 PM [REPLY](#)

I think this is really swell!! My drive to school every day is about 25 minutes, I could cook up some breakfast and it would be hot and ready by the time I got there. Bacon and Sausage? Delicious! You could dice up your potato and mix in some herbs and oil to get that nice breakfast potato. I don't know, maybe you could modify it to cook an egg? Probably you could make a boiled egg!

"Just a second professor, my biscuits are about to burn."



boocat says:

Jan 20, 2007. 6:48 PM [REPLY](#)

Great, treb!

Never apologize for your gorgeous head of hair. My husband would sell his soul to rock 'n' roll for your sensuous locks!



5Volt says:

Jan 12, 2007. 10:21 AM [REPLY](#)

I remember reading on the car magazine 'quattroruote' ('four wheels' the most respected in Italy) how they cooked a trout fish on the engine on a trip. At the time I did not have an engine of mine (possibly 20 years ago). Now things are different !...



Bilou says:

Nov 27, 2006. 6:55 AM [REPLY](#)

Miam miam!!

When I came across this, I couldn't resist a try!!

It works great, it tastes great, but most of all, it creates a hell of a reaction around you...

For my first attempt at "car-becue", I went for something simple: Chicken breast, pepper and onion... I even convinced my girlfriend to taste...my next creation...

Here's a picture of what it looked like.

Thanks for the instructable trebuchet03.

Bilou, from Quebec



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