



Zishta®

*Traditional Wisdom in Practice*

A Complete Guide to  
**Iron & Cast Iron Cookware**

Bodha—A Knowledge Sharing Initiative by Zishta





## Iron & Cast Iron Cookware

One of the questions that bother us is whether there is a difference between Cast iron and Iron cookware and if yes, what is it, where is it used & which one should we opt for?

Based on our documentation of oral traditions from the communities making these for centuries, generations who have used it in the past & scientific understanding, we bring to you the below insights. Read on.

First, let us differentiate between the time taken to cook any food. Cooking that needs longer duration and the ones that need a shorter duration plays an important role in deciding which is the right cookware for your needs- Iron or Cast iron cookware.

***Let us take Tawa as the starting point for this differentiation.  
Roti, Paratha, Dosa, Uttapam, etc  
Need a shorter time to get done.***

Tawas is made of both Iron and Cast iron. Let us understand what makes them different fundamentally.

### Iron Tawa

Iron tawa is made of Iron sheets which are cut into shapes of the Tawa. In manufacturing factories, the process ends here and the final product is sent to the retailers. In one community who have been traditionally making Iron tawas for generations, there is further processing like heating, beating, etc.





## Cast Iron Tawa

Cast iron tawa is made by melting either pure Iron or scrap Iron, again depending on the community making it and doing sand casting as a process to get the desired shape.

### Which Type of Tawa is a Better Option?

Ideally, it depends on one's comfort level. From a functionality of their output of giving crispy dosa etc, both work similarly.

Cast iron tends to give a little higher Iron addition in the food. It needs seasoning and gets better with usage. And yes, Cast iron is breakable.

Iron tawa does not need seasoning and can be used immediately. They are not breakable and have a long life.

Quick Fact: The earliest form of tawa was made of Iron. Cast iron came into usage later on.

### ***Now, let us explore cookware like Kadai, Skillet, Paddu Pan, etc where the cooking time needed is longer.***

Kadai, paddu pan, etc are made of both Iron and Cast iron. To cook for a longer duration, Cast iron is always better than Iron.

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## What are the various types of Iron & Cast iron cookware?

Iron or Cast iron Tawa: Heavier tawas are multi-purpose in usage and can be used for making Roti, Dosa, Paratha, Puran Poli, etc. The lighter ones are usually for chapatis.



**Light weight Iron Tawa**



**Heavy weight Iron Tawa**



**Pure Iron  
Seasoned Sengottai Dosa Kallu**



**Pure Iron Tadka Ladle**

### Kadai

This is made of Cast iron and is used for cooking sabzis like aloo, bhindi, taro, yam, beans, etc or frying papads, making mixtures, jalebis, etc.







### **Paddu, kuzhipaniyaram, Appe, Unniyappam pan**

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The names by which it is called indicate the uses of it. It is made of Cast iron.

### **Appam Pan**

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To make appams, a traditional Kerala dish. It is made of Cast iron.



### **Skillet**

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Frying eggs, searing meat, pan pizza or baking, all can be done in a Cast iron skillet. It can be used in an oven.

### **Cast Iron Raised Edge Pan**

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Delicious omelettes, scrambled eggs, pancakes or even neer dosa are best made in Zishta cast iron raised edge pan.





DOs



DON'Ts

## Of Iron & Cast Iron Cookware



### 1. Do we need to season Iron and Cast Iron Cookware?

Iron tawa does not need seasoning. Cast iron cookware or tawa need proper seasoning.

Cast iron cookware requires seasoning before the first usage as the tiny pores expand & oil in this renders the surface smoother with a layer giving a non-stick effect to the vessel. It is a simple process that needs to be done only once at the beginning of usage.

### 2. Can anything be cooked in Iron and Cast iron?

Tamarind based cooking & citric food is not recommended to be cooked in Cast iron or Iron cookware as acidic property releases more Iron in the food than what is needed & hence it gives a slightly bitter taste.

Any food cooked in ironware must be immediately transferred to another vessel.

After using Cast iron for over 4-5 months, we have observed no issues in using tomatoes in cooking. But tamarind, lemon, etc is a definite no-no.

Food cooked in Cast iron can be left in the vessel for 2-3 hours. Beyond that, it must be transferred to another vessel.

### 3. Does it Rust?

Yes, any Iron or Cast iron cookware would rust if not used for a long time (say, over 2 -3 weeks).

In regular usage, there is no additional process for maintenance. But if one would not use it for long, then apply a coating of cooking oil & store it to avoid rusting.

To remove the rust (if it is surface rusting), apply oil all over the cookware and heat it. Once cooled, wash it.

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## Seasoning & maintaining an Iron and Cast iron cookware

### How to season an Iron Tawa?

- Step 1: Wash the cookware well and immerse in starch water for a day.
- Step 2: Once dry, apply a mixture of castor oil and turmeric all over the vessel & leave it aside for a day.
- Step 3: Wash well & dry it. Keep it on the stove. Pour 5-6 spoons of oil & fry small onions in low flame for 5 – 10 minutes. Then throw the onions. Wash the cookware and it is ready to use.



*For details on seasoning check the video at*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fe8na-3yz0M&t=10s>

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### How to maintain Iron & Cast Iron Cookware?

- Clean it after use with regular dishwashing liquid or soap & regular scrubber.
- After cleaning, wipe it dry.
- If the cookware will not be used for more than a week or two, apply a coating of cooking oil.
- Cast iron gets better with usage.



## Zishta Iron & Cast Iron Cookware

Zishta collaborates with the community of artisans from Tenkasi region in Tamilnadu for the Iron & Cast iron cookware. The craft is at least 300 years old & popular for their unique way of making high quality (popularly known as railway grade Iron) hand-made Iron & Cast iron cookware.

A few years back, there were over 30 units and today there is only 1 small foundry due to unavailability of labor. It is so far the only known place to use railway grade Iron which is also called as first-grade Iron.

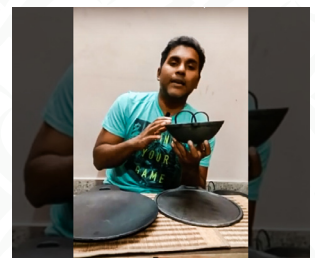
The Iron tawa made here has the unique traditional process of heating it to red hot using hay and coal and beating it to remove any impurities.

The key ingredient into making the best-Cast iron cookware here is the sand cast made of the local river sand. Their age-old technique of sand casting using sand from the local river has set this artisan cluster apart. It is also the only known place to melt pure Iron to make Cast iron cookware. The entire process is manual thereby creating a completely handcrafted authentic product. The process ends with treatment using hay & gingelly oil (til / Sesame oil).



**See a video guide about Iron and Cast iron Cookware here:**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKn6ZQZ0zmM>**



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**Have more queries?**

For a dialogue with Zishta, WhatsApp or call us at 6360966871  
or Email to [enquiry@zishta.com](mailto:enquiry@zishta.com)



## About Zishta

Zishta was started with a vision to revive traditions from where it originated centuries earlier and those that have immense utility value in our day to day lives. Our approach is to leverage traditional wisdom in making our homes more environmentally friendly and holistic. Zishta is authentic to the traditions by working with the same cluster of rural artisans who have been handcrafting these products using traditional techniques mastered by their ancestors and passed along.

Zishta is about building a family of believers who will be the future “Guardians of Traditional Wisdom”. We travel to nook and corner of our country, spend time with the artisans and the local people, understand the traditional value and authenticity and document to make sure such wealth of knowledge is available for everyone.

We take the authentic traditions to the next level by testing the products for its purity in the modern world. We test all our products in an independent NABL accredited lab and all the traditional products brought out by Zishta comply with RoHS standards (Restriction of Hazardous Substances).



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