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Chafing Dishes

All chafing dishes, or chafers for short, have three main elements, a frame, a water pan and a cover/lid. Regardless of the type or size, they use water as a medium to transfer heat from the heat source, typically one or more sterno, to the food pan. Always make sure that the chafer has **adequate water** to prevent burning and equipment damage. Chafers should **not be used for cooking food**, they are meant to keep food hot or warm. For best results, heat your food in an oven and use the chafer to keep food warm.

Getting Started

1. To start assemble the chafer, begin with the frame. If the frame has multiple pieces, ensure that all parts are put together properly and the unit is stable & level.
2. Insert the water pan into the frame, the water pan will have an inset "lip" around the rim.
3. After assembling the chafer, **fill the water pan with about ¾" to 1½" of water.**
4. Insert the food pan(s). For proper heating, the gaps around the lip of the water pan should be completely covered. For example one chafer should have one full pan or two half pans. If a chafer only one half pan and the other half of the chafer is uncovered, the water will evaporate out of the water pan and can lead to improper heating and/or soggy food.
5. Once the food is set in the chafers, pry the lid off of the sterno and use a match to light. Check the label of the sterno to see approximately how long they will burn for. Place the sterno under the water pan and close the lid.
6. If your chafers are outside, wrap aluminum around at least three of the sides to block the wind.

Warning

Do not leave an open flame unattended. Don't use anything but sterno type fuel in the burner. **Never use chafers without water** in the water pan. Do not put unit on a hot stove or an open flame. **Open the lid carefully** so that rising steam does not burn with your face or hands.

Maintaining Chafers While in Use

Occasionally **stir the food** to make sure the bottom doesn't burn and even heating. When it comes time to add more sterno, the **old burners may be hot** so use tongs to take them out. Typically sterno will burn 1½ to 2 hours, slightly faster if they are outside. Use an oven mitt to tilt/lift up one side of the chafer, if you hear a sizzle, add water to the water pan. The lid should remain on the chafer while the food is not being served. If you think the food is getting too hot, use only one sterno.