

# Cinnamon Buns in the Solar Oven

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published: Wed., Aug. 31 2011 @ 12:00PM



Courtesy David Wells

David Wells setting up his beloved solar oven.

*This week we're taking a (hot) look at solar cooking. Today: a conversation with David Wells of the Great Solar Cookout.*

Solar cooking has intrigued Arizona State University political science Professor David Wells for years. He is interested in all things sustainable, going so far as to bike to work whenever possible, even during Arizona's hellish summers.

As he sees it, cooking with the sun is a "natural match" for Arizona and is challenging as it is fun. (Then again, this *is* a guy who bikes to work in the summer in Phoenix.)

Wells indulged his curiosity when he spotted a 'sport' solar oven on craigslist.

That was a year and a half ago. Since then, Wells has purchased several new cookers, built and experimented with several of his own designs and perhaps most impressively, helped organize the [Great Solar Cookout](#) for his birthday. For my birthday I ate at [Nobuo](#); my former professor staged an event to promote sustainable solar cooking. Apparently, he is serious about this solar cooking thing.

*So what went wrong with my solar cookies? Find out after the jump.*

I asked Wells about [my crunchy solar cookies](#) and he explained that I probably overdid it. Solar cooking tends to take 3 to 4 times longer than normal cooking: With a recommended cooking time of around 10 minutes at 350 degrees, 90 minutes at peak heat was a bit much.

As a rule, the average solar oven reaches temperatures that range from 225-270 degrees in good sunlight. Practically, this means that standard recipes need to have their cooking times extended by 3 to 4 times. That extended cooking time might sound bad but because the temperatures remain low it is virtually impossible to burn anything in a solar oven.



Courtesy David Wells

During the summer Wells cooks as often as he can but his work schedule means that his big cooking days are the weekends. He routinely use his solar oven to cook everything from curried lentils to cinnamon rolls and pies. While he does not cook meat himself, he said that meat eaters report that solar oven produce tender moist meat. This is credited to the low temperature and long cooking times associated with solar cooking.

Interestingly, Wells and his family take their solar cookers camping. Because most designs are too bulky to carry around everywhere, Wells likes to set one up at his base camp in the morning. When he returns in the evening the food is still hot and ready to go

Questions? David Wells can be reached at [info@greatsolarcookout.org](mailto:info@greatsolarcookout.org)

*Cinnamon rolls in the sun? S'mores by the light of day? Tomorrow we'll talk about how to DIY.*

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