**Building the fire**

For the beginner, the first step is learning to build a fire properly. Successful

outdoor cookery calls for glowing coals, not active flames. The coals give

off even heat. You may be an “old hand” at building campfires, but here are

some practical suggestions:

1. Select an open spot, away from trees, dead leaves, or anything that may

easily catch fire.

2. Start with a crumpled piece of paper or handful of tinder.

3. Arrange very small twigs or sticks in teepee fashion. (Do not use leaves;

they smother the fire.) Lay the sticks so that plenty of air can get through the

spaces between them.

**Choose your firewood**

The kind of fire also depends

on the kind of wood you use.

Avoid wood with a pithy

center. It does not burn easily,

and gives little heat. Use split

logs rather than round, smooth

ones. They burn more readily.

Soft woods (pine, spruce,

cedar, aspen, basswood, and

birch) burn quickly and leave

ashes but few coals.

Hard woods (oak, ash, hickory,

apple, walnut, cherry, maple)

burn slowly and provide

excellent coals for baking

or toasting.

For a charcoal fire—This fire is

easy to light. If you have never used

charcoal, follow this plan:

1. Place the charcoal on the rack

where the food is to be cooked.

2. Fill the area under it with

crumpled newspaper. Light the

newspaper.

3. When the coals begin to turn

white or glow, dump them into the

firebox. Handle charcoal carefully.

Many times there may be no

apparent fire, but the coals may

still be alive. Be cautious and

avoid burns.

If the coals flame from fat dripping

into the fire, sprinkle with water. A

spray bottle is handy to use.

**How hot to build the fire**

Beginners often ask how hot to

build a fire. A quick rule of thumb

is to hold your hand palm side

down at about the position the

food will be above the fire and

count (one-thousand-one, onethousand-

two, etc.).

If you can hold your hand for

6 seconds or more, it is a slow fire;

5 seconds is a medium-slow fire;

4 seconds is a medium fire;

3 seconds is medium-hot; and

2 seconds is a hot fire.

Most foods are best

cooked over a

medium fire.

For a teepee fire—After the small

twigs begin to burn, add larger

sticks the same way you did the

small ones. A teepee fire burns

quick and hot, with the flame

directed to one spot.

For a log cabin fire—Build larger

sticks in log cabin style around the

kindling. This is a long-burning fire

but takes longer to get started.