



THE NINE LIVES OF A CAMPFIRE

From ignition to burnout, the intensity of heat given off by a campfire can be represented by a sideways U curve. If you divide the curve into nine, you will have the different stages of the fire, which we refer to as its nine lives. By getting to know the different stages, you will automatically become a better open-fire cook, because they determine when to cook the food.

For example, if you want the flames to lick and char the food, you should start cooking immediately after ignition. If you intend to grill and caramelize, then it's best to wait until the flames die down; otherwise your food will be covered in soot. If you want your heat to be more stable and less intense, wait a little longer.

It's a good idea to consider how much heat you will need and for how long before lighting your fire. A quick sear needs only a few pieces of wood, whereas a stew that needs to simmer for hours requires more effort from the start. If you choose to add more wood as you cook, you're essentially starting the life of the fire all over again.

The nine lives chart shows the nine stages, each of which represents a level of strength—that is, the temperature of the fire at that stage. At fire strength 1, the fire has just ignited; at fire strength 9, it has almost burned out.

The recipes in this book include the recommended fire strength as a guide for how hot your fire should be before you start cooking.

FIRE STRENGTH

1. *Ignition*
(200–400°F/100–200°C)
2. *Lighting*
(400–570°F/200–300°C)
3. *Burn-up*
(570–1,100°F/300–600°C)
4. *Burnout*
(1,100–1,800°F/600–1,000°C)
5. *Intense embers*
(1,800–2,200°F/1,000–1,200+°C)
6. *Embers*
(2,000–1,650°F/1,100–900°C)
7. *Hot embers*
(1,650–1,300°F/900–700°C)
8. *Warm embers*
(1,300–950°F/700–500°C)
9. *Afterheat*
(950–32°F/500–0°C)

