Le Creuset manufactures porcelain enameled cast iron cooking vessels as well as other quality products. The enameled cookware is cast from molten iron formed in sand moulds which are used only once. For this reason, one pan may look like another, but each is unique in its own way.

Cast iron is a highly efficient material which absorbs and distributes heat efficiently. For this reason, it is recommended to use on low to medium heat. There are a few exceptions like boiling water where cooking on high heat is appropriate and okay. Otherwise, cooking with high heat may cause food to stick, discolor the enamel coating, or cook the food unevenly. Remove cast iron from the heat and it does not cool off quickly. This helps your food stay warm while serving. Beware; iron tends to be heavy so these cooking vessels tend to be heavy as well.

Cast iron is an effective material for cooking so why cover it with enamel? Iron tends to rust; iron oxide (rust) doesn't add any complimentary flavors to your food. If your cast iron cooking vessel was not enameled, you would have to season and maintain it. Adding the porcelain enamel not only looks good, but has multiple benefits. The enamel, being a solid coating, is one of the most hygienic surfaces to cook on, does not stain, absorb odors, retain flavors, and is easy to clean. The enamel can be damaged, so limit cooking tools to plastic or wood.

The benefits of cooking with Le Creuset cast iron are many, but lets get down to the roasting pan specifically. This pan holds 5 1/4 quarts of food, measures 9 3/4 x 14 x 3 inches internally, and weighs 10.2 pounds. 5 1/4 quarts will typically feed 8 - 10 people when it comes to casseroles, so consider your recipes when determining the size you need. Except for roasts, the roasting pan tends to do best if at least 3/4 full. Any less and you may overwhelm your food with heat evenly dispersed in the pot.

I find that the cast iron adds a crispy texture to food that may be desirable with a dish like mac-n-cheese, while not so desirable for other dishes. Add the Le Creuset 9 x 11 1/2 inch roasting rack for roasting chickens and pork loins keeping them out of the grease. Some other possibilities for this pan include casseroles, pork chops covered with cornbread dressing, dinner rolls, baked squash, lasagna, scalloped potatoes, cobblers, pineapple upside down cake, or bread pudding. The possibilities almost seem endless to your imagination. One feature that people tend to complain about is the cost. The cost does seem steep compared to other pans made from other materials. Heck, cast iron doesn't seem like it should be expensive when comparing to that old cast iron pan past generations have used for cornbread and camping. However the manufacturing process requires making a mould for each and every pan produced. They then go through the enameling process before shipping these heavy pans. If you take what goes into making and distributing these high quality cast iron products, the cost tends to make sense. Then consider that this pan will easily last a lifetime when taken care of.

PROS: Extremely versatile Efficient absorption and distribution of heat Hygienic enamel cooking surface Does not stain, absorb odors, or retain flavors Easy to clean when not abused or misused Can be transferred from stove top to the oven to the table Can easily last a lifetime

CONS: Its heavy, as cast iron tends to be weighing in at about 10.2 pounds.