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STEAK

BOOT CAMP



2006



For 15 years, Weber has surveyed consumers across the country to find out what America loves to grill. What tops the list? Steak. Sure, burgers, hot dogs, and brats are all delicious on the grill, but nothing makes a griller's heart palpitate like a big, juicy, perfectly cooked steak.

A good steak is one of life's simple pleasures, but grilling it to perfection takes a little knowledge and skill. But once you've got it down, you'll be able to grill steaks every bit as good as what you'd get at a high-priced steak joint. Just follow these tips and techniques and you'll be large and in charge in no time when it comes to steak.

BEEF UP YOUR STEAK KNOWLEDGE

Ever stood in front of the meat counter pondering the grades of beef and what they mean? You're not alone. Here's the scoop.

There are eight beef grades specified by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), four of which are commonly found in the butcher's case. Meat grading is voluntary, but most producers participate for the consumer's benefit. The grades are a good gauge of what you can expect in terms of flavor and tenderness. Grades are based on the animal's age (younger is better) and the marbling in the muscle (flecks of fat visible in the meat).

Prime beef is the best you can buy – only 2 percent of beef earns this title for its abundance of marbling. Most Prime meat is sold to fine restaurants, but you can find it at a good butcher. When you want a really fantastic steak, hunt down some Prime. It's unparalleled in taste and juiciness.

Certified Angus Beef™ is not actually a USDA grade; it is a trademarked designation reserved for meat that meets strict standards for flavor, juiciness, and tenderness. Only 8 percent of beef meets this standard. Many people prefer it over other grades and the marbling can be as rich as with Prime. It's widely available in the grocery stores and meat counters and is an affordable alternative to Prime.

Choice is the second best and most widely available USDA grade of beef. The meat comes from fairly young cattle and has moderate to small amounts of marbling. Choice is an excellent value for the grill.

Select grade beef is leaner and less expensive than Choice grade. Because it has minimal marbling, it tends to be tougher and less flavorful. Unless you plan to marinate your steak, you are better off opting for a Choice cut for the grill.



IT GETS BETTER WITH AGE

There are two types of aging for beef: dry aging and wet aging.

Both make the meat more tender and flavorful. In the process of dry aging, beef is hung unwrapped in a refrigerated cooler for 3 to 6 weeks. During this time two things happen: the muscles lose up to 10 percent of their weight from moisture evaporation, concentrating the beef flavor in the meat, and the fibers in the muscle break down, making the meat more tender. Wet-aged beef is sealed in airtight bags, so there's no moisture loss. Wet-aged or dry-aged, it's a matter of personal preference, but both enhance the flavor of steak.



KNOW YOUR CUTS

All these cuts are particularly well suited for the grill—tender, juicy, and flavorful.

Porterhouse: This monster cut is taken from the large end of the short loin. It can weigh in at 2+ pounds. It's the perfect steak for sharing because it's actually two steaks in one. On one side of the bone you have a filet mignon, and the other is a strip steak.

T-Bone: Smaller than the porterhouse, the T-bone is cut from the narrow end of the short loin, so the section of filet mignon is smaller. The favorite of many steak enthusiasts who like the flavor the bone imparts.

Strip: A classic steakhouse cut, the strip steak is cut from the center of the top loin. It's even better if it includes a slice of the bone. There are many regional names for this cut: New York strip, Kansas City strip, shell, Delmonico, Ambassador, hotel cut, sirloin club, and top loin. Delicious, no matter how you say it.

Rib-Eye: Many will tell you there is no better cut for the grill than the rib-eye, particularly with the bone attached (also called a rib steak). It's super tender and rich in flavor. It's cut from the muscle behind the ribs.

Filet Mignon: Cut from the trimmed tenderloin, the filet mignon is an especially tender, tasty morsel. Grill this cut quickly over high heat for best results.

Sirloin: This steak is cut from the section between the tender short loin and the tender round. Steaks are sliced from the top and the bottom; hence the names top sirloin and bottom sirloin. Most steak lovers prefer top sirloin steaks—they are more tender and juicier than bottom sirloin steaks. A dip in a good marinade helps the bottom sirloin become more tender and flavorful.

Tri-Tip: An extremely flavorful and popular cut of bottom sirloin. Because of its size, it straddles the fence between a steak and a roast. This cut is uncommon in the northern and mid-western states, but a staple in the west and southwest. Sear it first, and then grill it over indirect medium heat. Slice it thinly for sandwiches or tortilla wraps. It also goes by the names tip roast and sirloin bottom butt.

Flank: One of the lowest-fat steaks, it's cut from the lean flank. It has almost no marbling, so it benefits from a good marinade to make it flavorful. Thinly sliced, it is fantastic in grilled fajitas.

Skirt: Also cut from the flank, this thin and inexpensive cut should be grilled quickly over high heat. Slice it across the grain of the meat for the most tenderness.

Flatiron: This flat steak, shaped like an old-fashioned iron, is cut from the shoulder. It's not common but it is gaining popularity. It tends to be a little tougher than a rib-eye or strip steak, but its flavor is deeper. Remove a thin line of gristle running down the center of the steak before grilling.



GET THE DRILL DOWN

Once you've selected just the right steak, there are seven simple steps for pulling a perfect steak off the grill every time. Follow them and your steaks will be worthy of a salute.

- 1. Give it a rest.** Prior to grilling, remove your steak from the refrigerator and allow it to stand at room temperature for 20 to 30 minutes. Why? First, the fibers in the meat relax, producing more tenderness after cooking. Second, a properly rested steak will cook faster than a cold one, which means less moisture will be lost.
- 2. Trim it down.** You will want to leave a small layer of fat around the edges of your steak to add flavor, but don't overdo it. Trim all but 1/4 inch of fat around the outer edge. Any more than that could lead to flare-ups.
- 3. Oil it up.** That's right. It doesn't seem necessary to oil a steak with lots of marbling, but it helps prevent sticking. No need to slather it on; a very light coat of extra virgin olive oil will do. Avoid oiling the cooking grate. Oil on a hot cooking grate by itself burns very quickly, creating unpleasant bitter flavors.
- 4. Sprinkle on the salt.** If you are grilling a steak and not using a recipe, salt the steak 20 to 30 minutes before it goes on the grill. It will begin to mingle with the juices, which helps in browning the steak when it is on the grill. But salting a steak too far ahead of time can be risky because the salt crystals have a tendency to draw moisture out of the meat over hours and hours. Kosher salt with its larger crystals and pure flavors is the salt of choice because it is less likely to dissolve completely and lose its individual character.
- 5. Keep an eye on things.** Unless it is a very thick cut, most steaks require less than 10 minutes total time on the grill, so refrain from multi-tasking when the steak is on. (Consult the grilling guide on page 7 for suggested cooking times.) Usually, you'll want to start by searing the steak over direct high heat. Make sure the grill is good and hot before placing the steak on the grill. This is critical for a good sear. After you've seared the steak, continue cooking over direct or indirect heat, depending on the thickness of the steak. Cuts under 1-1/4 inches thick cook quickly and can be done entirely over direct heat. Larger cuts require more cooking time and are best finished over indirect heat. While you are grilling, remember to keep the lid down. It will keep the heat up and speed up the cooking time.
- 6. Forego the fork and step away from the knife.** Meat forks are intended to help lift large roasts off the grate, not for flipping steaks or poking your meat while it cooks. Doing so will cause precious juices to escape, which will dry out your steak. Turn your steak with a set of tongs instead. When you think it's done, resist the urge to cut into it with a knife to check. Again, you'll lose some of that juicy goodness. A better plan is to set a timer when you put the steak on the grill. It takes the guesswork—and the stress—out of cooking a perfect steak.
- 7. Give it a rest—again.** After you remove the steak from the grill, let it rest for 3 to 5 minutes. This allows the juices that were pushed to the center of the meat by the heat of the grill to migrate back to all parts of the steak so you have juiciness throughout.



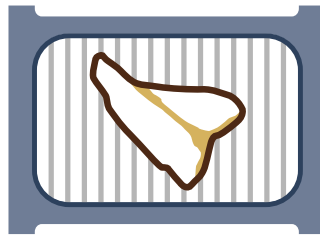
A WORD ABOUT DONENESS

Everyone likes their steak cooked just so. The USDA recommends that steak is cooked to at least medium-rare, which by their definition means an internal temperature of 145°F. Many steak aficionados will find this temperature too high. You can enjoy beef at a safe 145°F, but if you like your meat juicier, know that it comes with some risk. In order to reach 145°F as your finished temperature, remove your steak from the grill at 135°F to 140°F. Stopping short allows for carry-over cooking, which means the temperature continues to rise up to 10°F as the meat rests (the larger the cut, the higher it will rise).

HOW TO GET GREAT GRILL MARKS

Ever wonder how they get those fabulous crosshatched steak marks at the best steak houses? Here's how to do it in your own backyard.

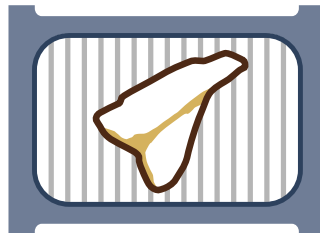
} SEAR



1

Preheat the grill and set it up for direct high heat (charcoal grills can be set up with medium heat on one side and high heat on the other). Place the steak over direct high heat. Allow the meat to sear for 1 to 2 minutes, depending on the thickness.

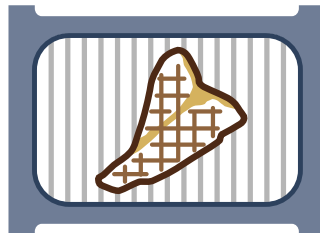
} ROTATE 90°



2

With a wide spatula or tongs, lift and rotate the steak a quarter turn (do not flip it). Sear for 1 to 2 minutes.

} FLIP & FINISH



3

Lift the steak with the spatula or tongs and flip it over. There is no need to rotate the steak on the second side and create another set of crosshatched marks, because only the first side will show on the plate. Cuts that cook in less than 8 minutes can be finished over direct high heat. For large cuts with a total cooking time of more than 8 minutes, finish cooking over direct or indirect heat, depending on the thickness of the steak (see the steak grilling guide on page 7).



GRILLING GUIDE

The following cuts, thicknesses, weights, and grilling times are meant to be guidelines. Cooking times are affected by altitude, wind, outside temperature, and desired doneness. Grill steaks for the time given on the chart, or to desired doneness, turning once. Cooking times for steak are for the USDA's definition of medium-rare doneness.

STEAK	THICKNESS/WEIGHT	APPROXIMATE GRILLING TIME
New York, porterhouse rib-eye, skirt, T-bone, tenderloin, or flatiron	1/2 inch thick	3 to 5 minutes direct high
	3/4 inch thick	5 to 7 minutes direct high
	1 inch thick	6 to 8 minutes direct high
	1-1/4 inches thick	8 to 10 minutes direct high
	1-1/2 inches thick	12 to 16 minutes; sear 8 to 10 minutes direct high, grill 4 to 6 minutes indirect high
	2 inches thick	18 to 22 minutes; sear 8 to 10 minutes direct high, grill 10 to 12 minutes indirect high
Flank steak	1-1/2 to 2 pounds, 3/4 inch thick	8 to 10 minutes direct medium-high
Sirloin steak	1 inch thick	8 to 10 minutes direct medium-high
Kabob	1 to 1-1/2 inch cubes	6 to 8 minutes direct high
Tri-tip	2 to 2-1/2 pounds	30 to 40 minutes; sear 10 minutes direct medium, grill 20 to 30 minutes indirect medium

DIRECT AND INDIRECT GRILLING

It sounds more complicated than it really is. Direct grilling is simply cooking food directly over the heat source. Indirect grilling is cooking food with the heat source to the side. It's that easy.



To set up your grill for direct cooking.

On a charcoal grill spread prepared coals evenly across the charcoal grate. On a gas grill, preheat the grill with all burners on high for 10 to 15 minutes, and then adjust the temperature, leaving the burners on directly under the food.



To set up your grill for indirect cooking.

On a charcoal grill bank prepared coals to the sides of the charcoal grate, leaving an area without coals that the food will be placed above for grilling. On a gas grill, preheat your grill on high, and then turn off the burners directly under the area where the food will be placed.

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