
Cooking with Grass-fed Beef

Tips for simply delicious steaks and roasts

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Savor it!

What's one of the best, time tested ways to make life better? It's enjoying delicious, healthy, home-cooked meals, on a regular basis with family and/or friends. Taking time to prepare and serve tasty, and nutritious meals, made with wholesome ingredients, will be one of the best investments you can make. It is our hope, that the meals you serve with our grass-fed beef will help nourish your family's health and happiness.

Fortunately, cooking delicious steaks and roasts can be relatively easy once you know some of the basics. Grass-fed meat is generally leaner than grain-fed meat from the grocery store and requires a little more care to cook properly. Yet, there are several things to remember when cooking meat, whether or not it is grass-fed, that will help ensure you have a great eating experience:

Basics:

The real secret to meat that is cooked right

Delicious, savory meat, that is cooked just how you like it, requires a simple, inexpensive tool that most top chefs use, but most home cooks don't even own. Chefs use this tool to ensure that meat is cooking properly, and to check that it is done to their customers liking. Amazingly, you can purchase one for about \$15. So, what is this magical instrument of good beef cooking? It's, simply, a good instant read thermometer.

- Insert the thermometer in the side of the meat at least an inch. Use a pair of tongs to hold a steak. Wait 3-5 seconds for a reading.

Thawing the meat

You will have the best results if you plan ahead and thaw out meat in the refrigerator. It usually takes about 24 hours, more or less, depending on the size of the cut.

Browning the meat creates the flavor:

The brown crust which forms on seared meat gives it the wonderful, crave-able meaty flavor. Brief high temperature cooking is needed to brown the meat, which greatly enhances flavor, this is called the Maillard reaction. Usually, browning can be accomplished in two to three minutes per side. Browning can be done at the beginning of cooking meat, or at the end. The biggest mistake people make is to move the meat too soon. If you put fresh meat on a hot grill or pan, it will stick until browning occurs. Then, magically, it will release along with the flavor. Use high heat. It's got to be hot: 500-700 degrees is best. Turn on the fan and open a window to deal with smoke. Be sure to dry the surface of the meat with a paper towel, first—this is necessary for browning. Moisture impedes browning. A little olive oil, or other good quality vegetable oil, added to the pan, or grill, or rubbed directly on the meat will greatly aid in searing the meat.

Again, we recommend brief high temps only for searing/browning meat. Prolonged high temperatures change the proteins in the meat, causing them to coil and toughen, and squeeze out the juices, drying out the meat. When the internal portion of the meat reaches 140 degrees or more, these physical and chemical changes start to happen.

Cook meat low and slow

Another secret of good chefs is to use lower temperatures (225-275 degrees) to cook the meat before, or after, browning. It takes longer, but this method is much more forgiving than higher temperature cooking. It also helps to guarantee more evenly cooked meat.

When meat is cooked at a lower temperature, it actually helps tenderize it. The reason is that there are enzymes in the meat called cathepsins, which break down connective tissue, helping to tenderize the meat. These enzymes do their work during the two week aging process we use, but they also work effectively during low temperature cooking. According to Cook's Illustrated, "as the temperature of the meat rises these enzymes work faster and faster until they reach 122 degrees, where all action stops...when steaks are cooked by conventional methods (high heat, fast cooking), their final temperature is reached much more rapidly, denying the cathepsins the time they need to properly do their job."

Let it rest

It's tempting to take that sizzling steak right off the grill and devour it immediately. However, a little patience will pay off, as the meat will benefit from a short rest after cooking. Plan to let the meat rest, under a lid or, better yet, a tent of foil. 5 minutes for steaks, and 10-20 minutes for roasts depending on the size. It will help the meat finish cooking and as the proteins cool they will reabsorb juices.

Salting meat:

While it's typical to salt steaks and roasts just before cooking, salting, done well in advance, can be beneficial. For steaks, salt at least 1 hour before cooking (overnight is OK, too), and 18-24 hours ahead of time for roast. The reason is that salt will initially pull the moisture out of the meat, drying it out, but once the salt is dissolved the meat will then pull the salt laden moisture back into it—this takes time. This method works well for seasoning meat and actually helps remove gamey flavors in venison. It also helps enzymes work to break down proteins in the meat, allowing it to cook up more tender.

Cook steaks, roasts and hamburgers to the following temperatures depending how well done you like them. Do not use these temperatures for braising (pot roast.)

Hamburger Tips:

- Season the meat, if desired, before cooking.
- You can put a frozen patty right onto a grill, or pan and cook it. It just takes a little longer.
- Use an instant read thermometer for these as well. Seriously, this is how chefs learn to cook burgers.
- Ever notice how burgers seem to bulge in the middle during cooking. The simple solution is to shape the patties so that they are slightly concave. In other words, make slight dimple, about 2-3 inches wide, in the middle of the burger. The patties will actually be flat when they are done cooking, and cook more evenly this way.
- Again, remember to sear the meat to get a good browning effect. Use high heat, and if frying in a pan, use a little oil.

Rare: 125 degrees

Medium Rare on the rare side: 130 degrees

Medium rare on the medium side: 135-140 degrees

Medium: 145-150 degrees

Well done: we don't recommend this...155+ degrees

A great book about cooking meat is America's Test Kitchen's *Steaks, Chops, Roasts and Ribs*. Their recipes are thoroughly tested, and their explanations of food cooking processes are helpful. The book has some great advice for cooking the various cuts of roasts that often end up in the bottom of the freezer, but make delicious eating when made properly. In fact, their recipe for braised roast has become one of our favorite meals. Their website, www.cooksillustrated.com is an excellent resource as well.

Roasts:

Few things smell better than the heavenly aroma of roast cooking in your oven. The flavor can be equally delicious, as well. It's one of the most comforting foods you can make. Yet, few people want to take the time to cook roast, anymore. It doesn't take a lot of effort, just some extra planning ahead.

Dry Roast versus Braising

There are two methods for cooking roasts: dry roasting and braising (pot roast). Dry roasting means using heat, usually in an oven, without added moisture, usually for a short period of time, 1-1 1/2 hours. Braising means to cook the meat with added moisture, such as water, stock, and or wine, such as when you cook in a crock pot, usually for a long time 2-4 hours. Some roasts only work well for braising, while others work well for both. The best roast for dry roasting is a rib roast, however, these are expensive. So, you can often substitute a sirloin top or tip roast, or a round roast and have decent results. Chuck roasts, are best used for braising, as they have more connective tissue, which braising helps to break down and tenderize.

Dry Roasting:

There are different methods for cooking roast this way. Some use high heat (350-400 degrees) throughout, while others rely on searing the meat at a high temperature, before or after cooking it at a low temperature (225 degrees).

If you have a rib roast, which is usually well marbled, you can use either method. However, if you are using a less expensive cut of roast, such as a sirloin, round, or chuckeye roast, use the low and slow method.

- The low and slow method: Heat oven to 225 degrees. Season the meat with salt and pepper (or other spices)—you can salt the meat 24 hours in advance for an even tastier and more tender finished product. Rub the meat with vegetable oil, sprinkle on pepper, then sear each side of the roast in a frying pan using oil, and medium high heat. Be sure that the meat is well browned on each side—this will take 3-4 minutes/side. Put the roast on a cooking tray and cook in the oven at 225 degrees until the internal temperature reaches 115-120 degrees—use your thermometer to check. This can take from 1 to 2 hours depending on the size of your roast. Turn off the oven and leave the roast in for another 30-50 minutes until the temperature reaches 130 degrees for medium rare, or 140 degrees for medium. Pull roast from oven, and cover with foil to let it rest for about 15 minutes before cooking.

Braising:

Forget everything mentioned above about cooking steaks or dry roasting. Braising is different. It actually relies on prolonged higher temperatures, and added moisture, to cook the meat until it falls apart. Braising is the technique used for pot roast and braised brisket. Cuts of meat, such as the chuck, which have lots of collagen, are often used. When cooking roast in liquid, it is important that the roast reaches an internal temperature of 210 degrees, for at least one hour. This process breaks down the collagen, so that the meat falls right off the bone. Since the meat is cooked in liquid, the higher temperature doesn't dry out the meat, like it would in dry roasting. Note that, boiling the meat makes it tough and dry. Instead, the liquid should be at a simmer. Again, bring the temperature of the meat to 210 degrees and keep cooking it for at least another hour. It's easiest to do this using a Dutch oven placed in a 250 degree oven. However, Nesco cookers or crock pots also work well. Plan on cooking the roast for 3-4 hours.

Simply Delicious Pot Roast

Serves 6 to 8. Published March 1, 2002, in Cooks Illustrated. www.cooksillustrated.com

For pot roast, we recommend a chuck roast, however, other roasts will work well, too. Remember to add only enough water to come halfway up the sides of these thinner roasts, and begin checking for doneness after 2 hours. If using a top-blade roast, tie it before cooking (see illustrations below) to keep it from falling apart. Mashed or boiled potatoes are good accompaniments to pot roast.

Ingredients

- 1 chuck roast (about 3 1/2 pounds)
- Table salt and ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 medium onion , chopped medium
- 1 small carrot , chopped medium
- 1 small rib celery , chopped medium
- 2 medium cloves garlic , minced
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup beef broth
- 1 sprig fresh thyme
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/4 cup dry red wine

Instructions

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 300 degrees. Thoroughly pat roast dry with paper towels; sprinkle generously with salt and pepper.
2. Heat oil in large heavy-bottomed Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering but not smoking. Brown roast thoroughly on all sides, reducing heat if fat begins to smoke, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer roast to large plate; set aside. Reduce heat to medium; add onion, carrot, and celery to pot and cook, stirring occasionally, until beginning to brown, 6 to 8 minutes. Add garlic and sugar; cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add chicken and beef broths and thyme, scraping bottom of pan with wooden spoon to loosen browned bits. Return roast and any accumulated juices to pot; add enough water to come halfway up sides of roast. Bring liquid to simmer over medium heat, then place large piece of foil over pot and cover tightly with lid; transfer pot to oven. Cook, turning roast every 30 minutes, until fully tender and meat fork or sharp knife easily slips in and out of meat, 3 1/2 to 4 hours.
3. Transfer roast to carving board; tent with foil to keep warm. Allow liquid in pot to settle about 5 minutes, then use wide spoon to skim fat off surface; discard thyme sprig. Boil over high heat until reduced to about 1 1/2 cups, about 8 minutes. Add red wine and reduce again to 1 1/2 cups, about 2 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. Using chef's or carving knife, cut meat against the grain into 1/2-inch-thick slices, or pull apart into large pieces; transfer meat to warmed serving platter and pour about 1/2 cup sauce over meat. Serve, passing remaining sauce separately.

Serve with gravy poured over potatoes, mashed or boiled; or noodles; or rice.

Cooking Great Steaks

First, and most important, if you want a high quality grilling steak, use the right cuts. The best cuts are tenderloin, ribeye, NY strip, T-bone/Porterhouse, Sirloin, & Chuckeye. Cuts labeled as steak such as round or flank, generally are not suited to grilling, and are instead best for stir fry, fajitas, stew, swiss steak (a braised steak).

- **Tenderloin** is the most tender meat, and it's delicious cooked on a grill or in the oven. It's wonderful with just some salt and pepper, applied just before cooking, for seasoning.
- **Ribeye, NY Strip, T-bone/Porterhouse** are all excellent grilling steaks, and are also well suited to pan frying. You can marinate these, or just add salt & pepper, or other seasonings before cooking.
- **Sirloin** can also make for a good grilling or pan fried steak, but will often need some extra trimming. It is also very good for stir fry, fajitas, kabobs, steak sandwiches, etc.
- **Round steak** can be grilled, but works for pan frying, followed by low and slow cooking in the oven, see recipe on page 6. Use round steak for stir fry, fajitas, stew meat, kabobs, or slow cook it to make swiss steak. You can also ask the butcher to make these into cube steaks, which helps tenderize these for use in chicken fried steak.

Savory steaks have a well-browned exterior for flavor, and a tender, juicy interior. Achieving a good brown, seared, steak, often comes at the expense of tenderness. How do you get the best of both worlds?

- First, we recommend that you have your steaks cut at least one inch thick. Better yet, go 1 ¼ or even 1 ½ inches thick. This helps you achieve a good sear, without charring the interior.
- Second, use high heat to sear, for 1-3 minutes per side, and low heat to finish cooking. Or alternatively, cook on low first, and sear the steak at the end.

Grilled steaks:

The most basic flavor enhancers are liberal amounts of salt and pepper, however, you can experiment with a wide variety of rubs, made from herbs and spices.

Use a two stage fire for grilling steaks.

- Create a hot fire on one half of the grill, and a warm fire on the other half. On a gas grill, adjust burners to achieve this. On a charcoal grill, put all the coals on one half. You want the heat at least 500-700 degrees.
- Clean the grill grates well. Rub a little vegetable oil on them, too, with a paper towel.
- Cook the steaks over the hot part of the grill first, to sear them. If you are cooking T-bone or Porterhouse steaks, remember to keep the tenderloin portion of the meat closest to the cool part of the grill—this part of the meat cooks quicker.
- It will take about 2-3 minutes to sear each side depending on the heat and thickness of the meat. Don't pull the meat too soon, however. It will stick to the grill until the browning is done.
- Move the meat to the cooler part of the grill to finish cooking, if it is not yet done. Check the temperature of the meat with your instant read thermometer to be sure it is done correctly.
- Remove from the grill and tent with foil, for five minutes, before serving.

Instructions for indoor cooked, thick cut steaks:

For indoor cooking: use the oven to cook the meat and a hot pan for searing the steak.

Sear the steaks after cooking—this works surprisingly well!

Cook steaks on a wire rack, over a pan, in a 250-275 degree oven until the internal temperature reaches 90-95 degrees for medium rare, or 100-105 degrees for medium. This can take 15-30 minutes depending on the thickness of the meat.

Heat vegetable oil in a pan over high heat until it just starts to smoke. Put steaks into the pan and sear until well browned—about 1-2 minutes. Turn steaks and sear on the other side.

Turn down the heat to medium and using tongs, cook the steaks on their sides, if they are thick—1 ½ to 2 inches. Return steaks to the wire rack and place a foil tent over them for 5-10 minutes.

Check the final temperature if you are not sure the steaks are done to your liking.

Instructions for marinated steaks

Garlic, Ginger, and Soy Sauce Marinade

Makes enough for 2 pounds of steak. Published May 1, 2003, *Cooks Illustrated*. www.cooksillustrated.com

Ingredients

1/3	cup soy sauce
3	tablespoons vegetable oil
3	tablespoons toasted sesame oil
3	medium cloves garlic , pressed through garlic press or minced (about 1 tablespoon)
1	inch piece fresh ginger , minced (about 1 tablespoon)
2	tablespoons dark brown sugar
2	teaspoons grated orange zest from 1 orange
1/2	teaspoon red pepper flakes
1	medium scallion , sliced thin

Instructions

Combine all ingredients in small bowl. For extra flavor, set aside 1/4 cup of the marinade before adding the steaks. Use this to dip the steaks into, after they are done cooking. Marinate steaks for at least one hour in a gallon sized ziploc bag, making sure to press out the air. Flip after 30 minutes. Remove steaks from marinade, letting excess marinade drip back into the bag. Discard the bag and marinade. Grill steaks, to desired doneness. Transfer to a shallow pan, pour reserved marinade over the top of them and let them rest for several minutes, covered with foil. You can flip them half way through to coat the meat on both sides. Slice and serve, passing reserved marinade, if desired.

Better than A-1 Marinade

For 4 to 6 individual steaks or one 2-pound steak. Published May 1, 2007 *Cooks Illustrated*. www.cooksillustrated.com

Ingredients

1/2	cup soy sauce
1/3	cup vegetable oil
2	tablespoons dark brown sugar
1/4	cup Worcestershire sauce
4	medium cloves garlic , minced or pressed through garlic press (about 4 teaspoons)
2	tablespoons minced fresh chives
1 1/2	teaspoons ground black pepper
2	teaspoons balsamic vinegar

Instructions

Combine soy, oil, sugar, Worcestershire, garlic, chives, and pepper in medium bowl. Remove 1/4 cup marinade and combine with vinegar in small bowl; set aside. 2. Place remaining marinade and steaks in gallon-size zipper-lock bag; press out as much air as possible and seal bag. Refrigerate 1 hour, flipping bag after 30 minutes to ensure that steaks marinate evenly. 3. Remove steaks from marinade, letting any excess marinade drip back into bag. Discard bag and marinade. Grill steaks as desired. Transfer steaks to shallow pan and pour reserved marinade over top. Let steaks rest for several minutes, turning meat halfway through. Slice steak or serve whole, passing reserved marinade if desired.

Note: do not add vinegar to the marinade that the steak will be in before cooking. The acid in the vinegar can toughen the meat. Add the vinegar to the reserve marinade that you will put on the steak after it is cooked.

Swiss Steak

This traditional standby is delicious with the sauce poured over rice or mashed potatoes. It works well with any of the cuts listed below, however, chuck roast is best. Ok, chuck roast isn't steak, but it really works better than anything for this recipe. You can cut the chuck into smaller pieces before browning to make serving it easier. Don't try to tenderize the meat by pounding on it. The meat will tenderize on its own through long braising in liquid, in your oven.

2-3 chuck steak
Salt & pepper
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 onion, chopped thin
3 garlic cloves, minced
½ teaspoon dried thyme
2 tablespoons of tomato paste
1 tablespoon of white flour
1 (14.5 ounce) can of diced tomatoes
1 ½ cups of chicken or beef broth

1. Heat oven to 300 degrees. Heat Dutch oven to medium high on your stove top. Add the vegetable oil. When the oil just starts to smoke it is ready for the steaks.
2. Open the meat packages and pat the steaks until dry. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place steaks in the hot, oiled, pan, and brown for 2-3 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate when done and set aside.
3. Add onions to the Dutch oven and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add garlic, thyme, and tomato paste, and flour and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in diced tomatoes and broth and bring to a boil.
4. Return the steaks with any accumulated juices to the Dutch oven. Cover with the lid, and place into the oven. Cook until the steak is tender, about 2 hours. Transfer steaks to a platter, and let rest for about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Cut steaks into slices, pour sauce over them and serve.

How to turn Round Steak into a good eating experience.

Round Steak
Salt
Ground Pepper
1 tablespoon of vegetable oil

1 heavy, cast iron fry pan
Small roasting pan
Heat oven to 250 degrees.

Round steak is lean and is never going to be as tender and juicy as a well-marbled Ribeye, and it doesn't have the flavor of Sirloin. However, it can be cooked so that it is a decent steak. There are several important tips to make this work, though.

1. Salt the steak at least an hour before cooking—you can even do this up to a day ahead of time. By adding salt over an hour before cooking, the salt has a chance to absorb through the meat, which not only improves flavor, it helps to slightly tenderize the meat.
2. Let steak warm to room temperature before cooking, if possible. Sprinkle steak with pepper.
3. Cook at a low temperature, 250 degrees, in the oven or on the grill. Cooking at a low temperature allows the enzymes in the meat, which become active between 70-115 degrees to help tenderize the meat. Remove the steak when the internal temperature of the meat is 115 degrees—use your instant read thermometer, or programmable oven thermometer.
4. Heat a heavy cast iron pan on top of the stove and add 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil. Once the oil is smoking slightly place the steak in the pan and brown on both sides—about 1-2 minutes/side. Be careful not to overcook. Use the meat temperatures listed on page two as your guide for when the steak is done to your liking. It's best not to overcook Round Steak, as it will be dry. Aim for rare to medium rare.
5. Brown the meat in a heavy, cast iron pan on top of the stove, after cooking in the oven. Allow the steaks to rest for 5 minutes before slicing. Slice this slices, across the grain, at about a 30 degree angle. Serve immediately.