

Twelve-Step Program: The Perfect Grilled Steak



1. TRIM STEAKS

To keep flare-ups to a minimum, use a sharp knife to trim any hard, white fat from the perimeter of the steaks. Leave no more than 1/8 inch of fat.



2. PAT DRY

Pat both sides of the steaks dry with paper towels—the first step to a beautiful crust, which is the hallmark of a perfect grilled steak.



3. SALT AND RUB

Next, rub the steaks on both sides with a mixture of equal parts salt and moisture-absorbing cornstarch. The salt both seasons the steak and draws moisture to the surface.



4. STASH IN FREEZER

Freeze the steaks, uncovered, for 30 minutes. The moisture drawn out by the salt evaporates in the dry environment of the freezer. Drier surface = better crust = better steak.



5. HEAT GRILL GRATE

Preheat the grill to keep the steaks from sticking. For gas, turn all the burners to high, then cover. For charcoal, place the grate over the hot coals and heat, covered, for five minutes.



6. CLEAN GRILL GRATE

Before you start cooking, use a grill brush to scrape off any stuck-on food from the grill. Grilling on a grate encrusted with the remnants of last night's dinner is like cooking in a dirty pan.



7. OIL GRILL GRATE

Oiling the grill grate also prevents the steaks from sticking. Dip a wad of paper towels in vegetable oil, grab the wad with grill tongs, and then brush the grate.



8. START ON HOT SIDE

Sear the steaks on the hot side of the grill, undisturbed, for two to three minutes. If you're grilling a porterhouse or T-bone, place the tenderloin side nearer the cool side of the grill.



9. FLIP AFTER BROWNING

Don't move the steaks before the crust has formed. Give the steaks a wiggle: If they don't release easily, leave them alone until they do. Brown the second side for another two to three minutes.



10. MOVE TO COOL SIDE

Once the steaks are well browned on both sides, slide them to the cool side of the grill and continue cooking until they reach your preferred degree of doneness.



11. CHECK DONENESS

Insert an instant-read thermometer into the side of the steaks. Take them off the grill at 120 degrees for rare, 125 for medium-rare, and 135 for medium.

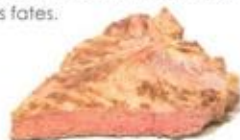


12. GIVE IT A REST

Put the steaks on a plate, cover loosely with foil, and let them rest for five minutes to let the flavorful juices redistribute; if you slice the steaks right away, some juices will run out.

Avoid These Mis-Steaks

Few things are more frustrating than anticipating a nicely browned, juicy steak only to find yourself gnawing at a dried out, pale, or flavorless one. Avoid those piteous fates.



WET AND PALE

Dry It! Steak that is put on the grill when its exterior is wet never will develop color.



CRUSTY BUT RAW

Steaks need to finish over gentle heat to cook through properly. Cooked over high heat the start to finish, the steak will burn on the outside before the inside is cooked.



BURNT AND DRY

To take the adventure out of grilling, use an instant-read thermometer to check the meat's temperature. Or else you might end up with a steak like this.

Stand-Ins

Lack the supplies or equipment you need? You can make do with these substitutions and still eat great steaks for dinner.



NO CHIMNEY STARTER

If you don't have a chimney starter, open the bottom air vent and place eight crumpled sheets of newspaper in the kettle. Place the lower grate over the paper. Then pile the charcoal on the lower grate and light the paper. Continue as you would with a chimney starter.



NO TONGS

Drop that fork. If you don't own a set of tongs, use a heatproof spatula. It's somewhat unwieldy, but it's still much better than a fork, which can pierce the steak, letting flavorful juices drip onto the fire.