

COOKING SKILLS

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1

Choose, cook and serve beef with confidence

8 Chapters | Philip Osztromok | Generated with Claude

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Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1

Chapter 1 · Know Your Beef

SKILL GOAL

Choose the right cut, handle raw beef safely and cook a first steak.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Beef is the **muscle of the animal**, and how tender a cut is depends on how hard that muscle worked. Muscles along the back barely work, so the meat is tender and cooks fast (steak). Muscles in the neck, shoulder, legs and belly work all day, so they have more flavour but are tough until slow cooking melts their connective tissue. The right cut for the method is half of cooking beef well.

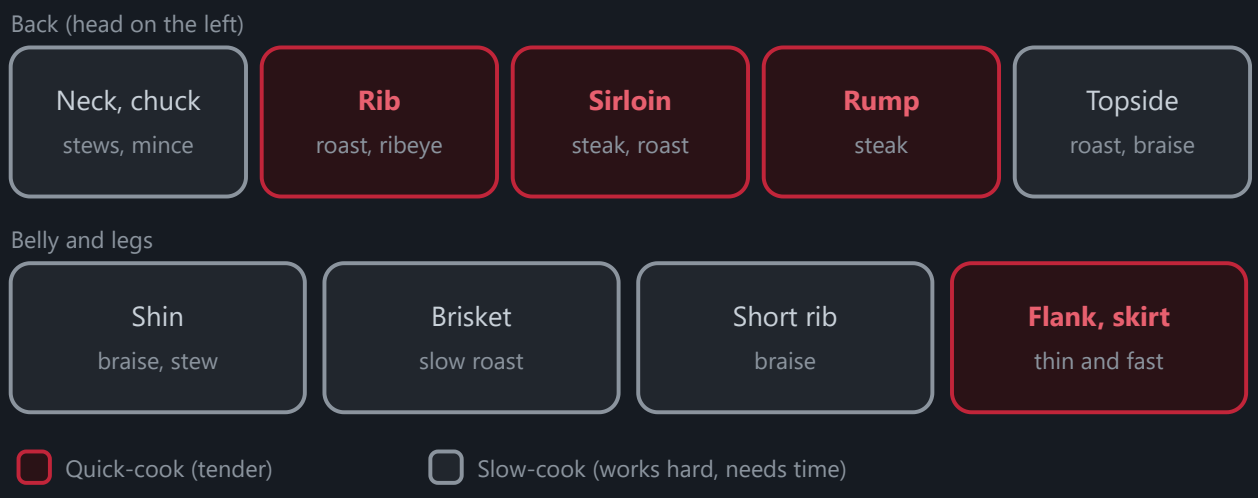


Figure 1. Muscles that work hard (neck, legs, belly) are tough and need time; muscles that hardly work (along the back) are tender and cook quickly.

The method

- **Match the cut to the method:** tender cuts for quick, hot cooking; tough cuts for long, slow cooking.

- **Look at the label:** the cut, the weight, the use-by date and, on mince, the fat percentage.
- **Season ahead:** salt a steak at least an hour before cooking, or just before, but not in between.
- **Go by thickness and temperature**, not by the clock.
- **Always rest and slice across the grain.** See Cooking Skills: Knife Skills 1, chapter 7 for slicing meat.

CUT	WHERE IT IS FROM	BEST FOR	COST
Fillet	Inside the loin, barely works	Quick pan-frying; very tender, mild	Dearest
Ribeye	The rib, well marbled	Quick pan-frying, griddling; full flavour	High
Sirloin	The loin, with a strip of fat	Pan-frying, roasting; good balance	High
Rump	The back end	Pan-frying (sliced); lots of flavour	Medium
Flank and skirt	The belly, long fibres	Thin and fast, sliced across the grain	Low to medium
Topside and silverside	The back leg, lean	Roasting, or braising	Medium
Chuck, shin and brisket	Neck, shoulder, leg and chest	Stews and braising; slow and rich	Low
Mince	Trimmings, often chuck	Sauces, pies, chilli; fat % matters	Low

HANDLING RAW BEEF, RARE BEEF AND THE BUDGET

Raw beef hygiene: keep raw meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge in a covered dish so it can't drip onto other food, use a separate board and knife for raw meat (or wash them in hot soapy water before they touch anything else), and wash your hands for 20 seconds after handling it. Don't rinse raw beef under the tap: it spreads germs around the sink and does nothing to remove them. Cook or freeze it by the use-by date.

Whole cuts and mince: germs sit on the outside of a whole piece of beef (a steak or a joint), and searing the surface deals with them, which is why a steak can be served rare. Mince, burgers, sausages and rolled or tenderised joints can have germs all the way through, so they must be cooked right through (no pink, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre). Rare beef is not recommended for very young children, older people or anyone with a weakened immune system, and the advice for pregnancy depends on the cut, so check current NHS and FSA guidance.

On a budget: the tender cuts (fillet, ribeye, sirloin) are the dearest. Rump, flank, skirt and onglet cost less and have more flavour if you slice them thinly across the grain, and tough cuts (chuck, shin, brisket) are cheapest of all when you cook them slowly.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Reading the label and the counter

30 minutes at the shops | No cooking | understanding what you are buying

Before you cook beef you need to know what to buy. Visit a supermarket or a butcher and look at three packs: a steak, a pack of mince and a braising cut. Write down what each label tells you. This is a shopping exercise, so you only need to buy the packs if you want to cook with them later.

INGREDIENTS (1 PORTION)

1	notebook and pen
1 pack	pack of rump steak, about 250 g
1 pack	pack of beef mince
1 pack	pack of stewing or braising steak
1	cool bag or insulated shopping bag

1. Read the label on each pack: the cut name, the weight, the use-by date, the price per kilo and, on mince, the fat percentage (for example 5% or 20%). Write them in your notebook and work out which is the cheapest per kilo.
2. Look at the colour and the fat. Fresh beef is a deep cherry-red (it can be brownish where it touches the tray, which is harmless), and fat should be creamy white or pale yellow, never grey or slimy. Look for fine white flecks of fat inside the meat, called marbling.
3. If you are at a butcher, ask what the cut is for and how long they would cook it. Put the beef in the cool bag, keep it cold on the way home, and put it in the fridge straight away.

BUYING, CARRYING AND STORING

Raw beef hygiene: keep raw meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge in a covered dish so it can't drip onto other food, use a separate board and knife for raw meat (or wash them in hot soapy water before they touch anything else), and wash your hands for 20 seconds after handling it. Don't rinse raw beef under the tap: it spreads germs around the sink and does nothing to remove them. Cook or freeze it by the use-by date.

Whole cuts and mince: germs sit on the outside of a whole piece of beef (a steak or a joint),

> and searing the surface deals with them, which is why a steak can be served rare. Mince, burgers, sausages and rolled or tenderised joints can have germs all the way through, so they must be cooked right through (no pink, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre). Rare beef is not recommended for very young children, older people or anyone with a weakened immune system, and the advice for pregnancy depends on the cut, so check current NHS and FSA guidance.

LEVEL 1 · FIRST STEAK

A first pan-fried steak

15 minutes plus 5 minutes resting | 2 portions | searing a steak and slicing it across the grain

A first look at the whole method in one go: dry, season, sear, rest and slice. Chapter 2 goes into steak cooking in depth, so just aim for a browned outside and a pink middle.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	rump steaks, about 200 g each and 2 cm thick
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 pinch	flaked sea salt, to taste
1 pinch	freshly ground black pepper, to taste
15 g	butter

1. Take the steaks out of the fridge 20 minutes before cooking. Pat them very dry with kitchen paper and season both sides with salt and pepper.
2. Heat a heavy frying pan over a high heat until it is very hot, add the oil, and lay in the steaks. Cook for about **2 to 3 minutes a side** for medium-rare, turning once and adding the butter for the last minute.
3. Rest on a warm plate for 5 minutes. Slice across the grain (the lines of the muscle fibres) into strips about 1 cm thick and serve with any juices spooned over.

HOT PAN, RESTING AND SLICING

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Resting: after cooking, leave the beef on a warm plate or board, loosely covered with foil, for about 5 minutes for a steak and 20 to 30 minutes for a joint. The juices settle, so they stay in the meat instead of running onto the board, and the centre rises a few degrees as it rests.

Knife safety: slice and carve on a stable board (a damp cloth underneath stops it sliding) with a

> sharp knife, because a blunt knife slips. Keep your guiding fingertips tucked back, and let the knife do the work. A carving fork or tongs holds the joint steady.

LEVEL 2 · SALT AHEAD

A dry-brined sirloin

1 hour salting plus 15 minutes cooking | 2 portions | seasoning in advance for a better crust and flavour

Salting a steak an hour or more ahead lets the salt draw out a little moisture and then be drawn back in, so the meat is seasoned all the way through and the surface dries, which gives a better crust. It costs nothing but a little time.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	sirloin steaks, about 250 g each and 2.5 cm thick
1½ tsp	flaked sea salt
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
15 g	butter
1 pinch	freshly ground black pepper

1. Pat the steaks dry and sprinkle the salt evenly over both sides. Put them on a rack or plate, uncovered, in the fridge for at least **1 hour** (up to overnight). Take them out 20 minutes before cooking and pat off any moisture.
2. Heat the oil in a heavy pan over a high heat and lay in the steaks. Cook for about **3 minutes a side** for medium-rare, adding the butter and pepper for the last minute.
3. Rest for 5 minutes, then slice across the grain and taste. Notice how evenly it is seasoned compared with the steak you salted only before cooking.

SALTING, HOT PAN AND THICKNESS

Raw beef hygiene: keep raw meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge in a covered dish so it can't drip onto other food, use a separate board and knife for raw meat (or wash them in hot soapy water before they touch anything else), and wash your hands for 20 seconds after handling it. Don't rinse raw beef under the tap: it spreads germs around the sink and does nothing to remove them. Cook or freeze it by the use-by date.

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

> **Thickness:** steaks vary in thickness more than in weight, so go by thickness, not by the clock. A steak about 2 cm thick needs very different timing to one 4 cm thick, and the timings in this course are only a starting point.

LEVEL 3 · COMPARE

A three-cut tasting

25 minutes | 3 small tasting portions | tasting how different cuts behave

Cook three cuts the same way and taste them side by side. You will find that the dearest cut is not always the tastiest, and that thin flank is delicious when sliced properly but chewy when it isn't.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

1	rump steak, about 150 g
1	sirloin steak, about 150 g
1	flank or skirt steak, about 150 g
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 pinch	flaked sea salt
1 pinch	freshly ground black pepper

1. Salt and pepper all three steaks and pat them dry. Fry the rump and sirloin in a very hot pan for about 2 to 3 minutes a side and the flank for about 1 to 2 minutes a side, in two batches if the pan is crowded.
2. Rest each for 5 minutes. Slice the rump and sirloin 1 cm thick across the grain. Slice the flank **very thinly across the grain**.
3. Taste each in turn and write down the flavour, the texture and the price per portion in the tasting-notes table.

COOKING THREE CUTS SAFELY

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Raw beef hygiene: keep raw meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge in a covered dish so it can't drip onto other food, use a separate board and knife for raw meat (or wash them in hot soapy water before they touch anything else), and wash your hands for 20 seconds after handling it. Don't rinse raw beef under the tap: it spreads germs around the sink and does

nothing to remove them. Cook or freeze it by the use-by date.

Knife safety: slice and carve on a stable board (a damp cloth underneath stops it sliding) with a sharp knife, because a blunt knife slips. Keep your guiding fingertips tucked back, and let the knife do the work. A carving fork or tongs holds the joint steady.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Salting time

None, 1 hour and overnight.

1. Cook three similar steaks: one salted just before cooking, one salted 1 hour ahead and one salted the night before and left uncovered in the fridge.

Look for: The salted-ahead steaks are seasoned all through and brown better, because the surface is drier. The overnight steak may feel a little firmer and more cured. Write down which you like best.

EXPERIMENT

Fridge or room temperature

Cold from the fridge or 30 minutes out.

1. Cook two similar steaks the same way, one straight from the fridge and one after 30 minutes on the side (not longer than 30 to 60 minutes, and keep it covered).

Look for: The colder steak usually has a thicker grey band under the crust, and the other cooks more evenly. The difference is small for a thin steak, bigger for a thick one.

EXPERIMENT

Lean or marbled

Lean and fatty steak.

1. Cook a lean cut (such as rump) and a well-marbled cut (such as ribeye) the same way and taste them.

Look for: The marbled cut tastes richer and juicier because the fat melts as it cooks. The lean cut is firmer and more beefy, and can taste drier if overcooked.

EXPERIMENT

With and against the grain

Same steak, two ways.

1. Cook a flank or skirt steak, rest it, and cut half across the grain and half along it.

Look for: Cut across the grain, the slices are tender, because you have shortened the muscle fibres. Cut along the grain, they are long and chewy. This is the most important slicing rule in beef.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Label reading				
First pan-fried steak				
Dry-brined sirloin				
Three-cut tasting				
Salting time				
Fridge or room temperature				
Lean or marbled				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
With and against the grain				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Steak is grey and tough	Overcooked, or the pan wasn't hot	Dry the steak, heat the pan until very hot and use a thermometer
Steak is chewy to eat	Wrong cut, or sliced along the grain	Slice across the grain and rest before slicing
Pale, steamed surface	Wet steak or an overcrowded pan	Pat dry and cook one or two at a time
Steak is too salty	Too much salt for the thickness	Use about 1 teaspoon of flaked salt per 400 g
Beef smells sour or looks slimy	Past its best	Throw it away: never taste to check
Mince is greasy	High-fat mince	Choose 5 to 10% fat for sauces, or drain off fat

RAW BEEF, HOT PANS AND LEFTOVERS

Raw beef hygiene: keep raw meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge in a covered dish so it can't drip onto other food, use a separate board and knife for raw meat (or wash them in hot soapy water before they touch anything else), and wash your hands for 20 seconds after handling it. Don't rinse raw beef under the tap: it spreads germs around the sink and does nothing to remove them. Cook or freeze it by the use-by date.

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Leftovers: cool cooked beef quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover it and keep it in the fridge for

up to about 2 days (general guidance). Reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, and reheat it only once. Don't leave cooked beef standing at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can name three tender cuts and three tough cuts.
- ☐ I can read a beef label and know what the fat percentage means.
- ☐ I handle and store raw beef safely.
- ☐ I can pan-fry a steak, rest it and slice it across the grain.
- ☐ I know why salting ahead helps.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 2 is Steak in the Pan: searing, doneness and resting, in depth.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1

Chapter 2 · Steak in the Pan

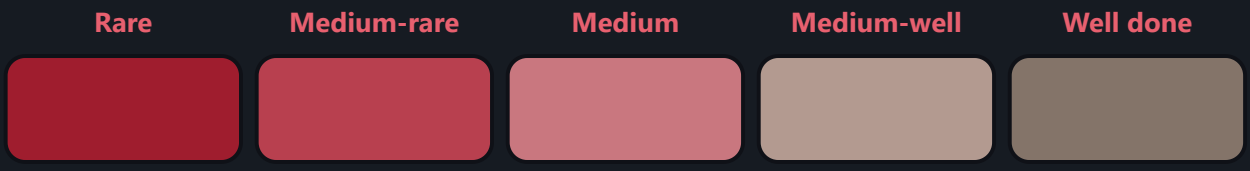
SKILL GOAL

Cook a steak to the doneness you want with a good crust.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A good steak is built on a **brown crust** and a **centre cooked to the right temperature**. The crust comes from a very hot pan and a dry surface, because water must evaporate before browning starts. The centre depends on thickness and on taking the steak off at the right moment, because it keeps cooking as it rests. A thermometer takes the guesswork out.



Rare	Medium-rare	Medium	Medium-well	Well done
about 50°C	about 55°C	about 60°C	about 65°C	70°C and over
red, cool centre	red-pink, warm	pink, hot	a hint of pink	brown all through

Centre temperature when you take the steak off. It rises a few degrees as it rests.

Figure 2. Doneness is a temperature: take the steak off about 3 to 5 degrees before the one you want, and let it rest.

The method

- **Dry the steak** and season it. Water on the surface makes steam, not a crust.
- **Heat the pan until very hot** before the steak goes in. Use a heavy pan and an oil with a high smoke point.
- **Leave it alone:** don't move the steak until the first side has a crust.
- **Take it off early:** remove it about 3 to 5°C before your target temperature.

- **Rest** for about 5 minutes, then slice across the grain.

DONENESS	CENTRE TEMPERATURE (APPROXIMATE)	COLOUR	FEEL (APPROXIMATE)
Rare	About 50°C	Red, cool middle	Very soft
Medium-rare	About 55°C	Red-pink, warm	Soft, springy
Medium	About 60°C	Pink, hot	Firmer, springy
Medium-well	About 65°C	A hint of pink	Firm
Well done	70°C and over	Brown all through	Very firm

HOT PANS, RARE BEEF AND THERMOMETERS

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Whole cuts and mince: germs sit on the outside of a whole piece of beef (a steak or a joint), and searing the surface deals with them, which is why a steak can be served rare. Mince, burgers, sausages and rolled or tenderised joints can have germs all the way through, so they must be cooked right through (no pink, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre). Rare beef is not recommended for very young children, older people or anyone with a weakened immune system, and the advice for pregnancy depends on the cut, so check current NHS and FSA guidance.

Thermometer: a digital probe thermometer is the best way to know when beef is ready. Push the tip into the middle of the thickest part, away from bone, and clean it with hot soapy water between uses. The temperatures in this course are approximate and can vary with the cut and the oven, so treat them as a guide and take a reading a little early.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Pan-fried sirloin

20 minutes plus 5 minutes resting | 2 portions | searing a steak and basting it with butter

The classic steak: a very hot pan, a brown crust and a pink middle, finished with garlic and thyme butter. Everything depends on a hot, dry pan and a dry steak.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	sirloin steaks, about 250 g and 2.5 cm thick
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
25 g	butter
2	garlic cloves, lightly crushed with the skin on
2	sprigs of thyme
1 pinch	flaked sea salt and black pepper

1. Take the steaks out of the fridge 20 minutes ahead, pat them very dry and season well with salt and pepper on both sides.
2. Heat a heavy pan over a high heat for 2 minutes, add the oil and lay in the steaks away from you. Don't move them for **2 minutes**, then turn and cook for **2 more minutes**.
3. Add the butter, garlic and thyme and tilt the pan, spooning the foaming butter over the steaks for a minute. Take the steaks off at about 52 to 54°C for medium-rare, rest for 5 minutes and slice across the grain.

HOT PAN, THERMOMETER AND RESTING

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Thermometer: a digital probe thermometer is the best way to know when beef is ready. Push the tip into the middle of the thickest part, away from bone, and clean it with hot soapy water between uses. The temperatures in this course are approximate and can vary with the cut and the oven, so treat them as a guide and take a reading a little early.

> **Resting:** after cooking, leave the beef on a warm plate or board, loosely covered with foil, for about 5 minutes for a steak and 20 to 30 minutes for a joint. The juices settle, so they stay in the meat instead of running onto the board, and the centre rises a few degrees as it rests.

LEVEL 1 · THIN AND FAST

A quick thin steak

15 minutes plus 5 minutes resting | 4 portions | cooking a thin cut hot and fast, then slicing across the grain

Skirt and flank are cheaper than sirloin and full of flavour, but they have long, coarse fibres. They must be cooked fast and sliced **very thinly across the grain**, or they are tough.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

400 g	skirt or flank steak, in one or two pieces
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 tsp	smoked paprika (optional)
1 pinch	flaked sea salt and black pepper
1	lemon or lime, cut into wedges

1. Pat the steak dry and rub it with the oil, paprika, salt and pepper. If it is long, cut it into pieces that fit your pan.
2. Heat a heavy pan until it is smoking hot (open a window) and sear the steak for **1 to 2 minutes a side**. Thin steak is done as soon as it is browned: don't go on.
3. Rest for 5 minutes, then look at the lines in the meat and slice thinly **across** them, at a slant. Serve with lemon or lime wedges.

SMOKE, HOT PAN AND SLICING

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Knife safety: slice and carve on a stable board (a damp cloth underneath stops it sliding) with a sharp knife, because a blunt knife slips. Keep your guiding fingertips tucked back, and let the knife do the work. A carving fork or tongs holds the joint steady.

On a budget: the tender cuts (fillet, ribeye, sirloin) are the dearest. Rump, flank, skirt and onglet

> cost less and have more flavour if you slice them thinly across the grain, and tough cuts (chuck, shin, brisket) are cheapest of all when you cook them slowly.

LEVEL 2 · THICK STEAK

A thick steak finished in the oven

25 minutes plus 5 minutes resting | 2 portions | browning on the hob and finishing gently in the oven

A thick steak can burn on the outside before the middle is warm. Sear it on the hob for the crust, then finish it in a hot oven so the heat reaches the centre without charring it.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	ribeye steaks, about 300 g and 3.5 cm thick
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
30 g	butter
1	sprig of rosemary
1 pinch	flaked sea salt and black pepper

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan). Pat the steaks dry and season them. Heat an ovenproof frying pan over a high heat, add the oil and sear the steaks for **2 minutes a side**, then add the butter and rosemary and baste for 30 seconds.
2. Put the pan in the oven for **4 to 6 minutes** for medium-rare. Check with a thermometer: take it out at about 52 to 54°C.
3. Lift the steaks onto a warm plate, rest for 5 minutes, and slice or serve whole with the buttery juices.

HOT HANDLE, HOT OVEN AND THICKNESS

Hot oven and hot tins: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put hot tins on a heatproof surface. A roasting tin of hot fat is heavy and hot, so never carry it across a busy kitchen, and keep children out of the way.

Hot pan handle: an ovenproof pan's handle stays hot long after it comes out of the oven. Put a cloth or an oven glove over it as a reminder, and never grab it with bare hands.

Thickness: steaks vary in thickness more than in weight, so go by thickness, not by the clock. A steak about 2 cm thick needs very different timing to one 4 cm thick, and the timings in this course are only a starting point.

LEVEL 3 · REVERSE SEAR

A reverse-sear thick steak

50 minutes plus 5 minutes resting | 2 to 3 portions | cooking low and slow first, then searing last

The reverse sear is the opposite of normal: warm the steak slowly in a low oven first, so it cooks evenly from edge to edge, then give it a hot, fast sear at the end for the crust. It gives a pink centre with very little grey band.

INGREDIENTS (3 PORTIONS)

600 g	thick steak (sirloin or rump), about 4 cm thick
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
20 g	butter
1 pinch	black pepper

1. Heat the oven to 120°C (100°C fan). Salt the steak, put it on a rack over a tray and cook for **30 to 45 minutes**, until the centre reads about 45°C for medium-rare.
2. Heat a heavy pan until smoking, add the oil and sear the steak for **1 minute a side** (and on its edges), adding the butter for the last 30 seconds. The centre will rise to about 52 to 54°C.
3. Rest for 5 minutes and slice across the grain.

LOW OVEN, SEARING AND THERMOMETER

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Thermometer: a digital probe thermometer is the best way to know when beef is ready. Push the tip into the middle of the thickest part, away from bone, and clean it with hot soapy water between uses. The temperatures in this course are approximate and can vary with the cut and the oven, so treat them as a guide and take a reading a little early.

Hot oven and hot tins: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put hot tins

> on a heatproof surface. A roasting tin of hot fat is heavy and hot, so never carry it across a busy kitchen, and keep children out of the way.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Pan heat

Medium or very hot.

1. Cook one steak in a medium-hot pan and another in a very hot pan, for the same time.

Look for: The steak in the hotter pan has a darker, crisper crust and a thinner grey band. The cooler pan gives a pale, steamed surface and a thicker grey band.

EXPERIMENT

Basting with butter

With and without.

1. Cook two steaks, adding butter and herbs to one for the last minute and basting it, and leaving the other plain.

Look for: The basted steak has a richer flavour and a deeper colour. Butter burns if it goes in too early, so add it at the end.

EXPERIMENT

Resting time

None, 5 and 15 minutes.

1. Cook three steaks the same way and slice one at once, one after 5 minutes and one after 15 minutes.

Look for: The unrested steak leaks juice onto the board and eats drier; the rested ones keep their juice. Fifteen minutes may be a little cool, so 5 to 10 is best for a steak.

EXPERIMENT

Touch test or thermometer

Check your fingers.

1. Press the steak with a fingertip as it cooks, note how it feels, then check with a thermometer and cut one open.

Look for: Touch is a useful guide once you have practised, but a thermometer is exact. Write down how each doneness feels to your finger.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Pan-fried sirloin				
Quick thin steak				
Thick steak finished in the oven				
Reverse-sear steak				
Pan heat				
Basting with butter				
Resting time				
Touch test or thermometer				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Grey, no crust	Wet steak or pan not hot	Pat dry; heat the pan longer; don't crowd it
Burnt outside, raw inside	Steak too thick for the heat	Sear, then finish in the oven (or reverse sear)

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Tough steak	Overcooked or sliced along the grain	Take it off earlier; slice across the grain
Smoky kitchen	Oil that burns, or pan too hot for too long	Use a high smoke point oil; open a window; add butter at the end
Steak sticks to the pan	Turned too soon	Wait until it lifts easily and has a crust
Juices run onto the board	Not rested	Rest for 5 minutes before slicing

HOT PANS, RARE BEEF AND LEFTOVERS

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Whole cuts and mince: germs sit on the outside of a whole piece of beef (a steak or a joint), and searing the surface deals with them, which is why a steak can be served rare. Mince, burgers, sausages and rolled or tenderised joints can have germs all the way through, so they must be cooked right through (no pink, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre). Rare beef is not recommended for very young children, older people or anyone with a weakened immune system, and the advice for pregnancy depends on the cut, so check current NHS and FSA guidance.

Leftovers: cool cooked beef quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover it and keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days (general guidance). Reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, and reheat it only once. Don't leave cooked beef standing at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can dry and season a steak and heat the pan properly.
- ☐ I know the temperatures for rare, medium-rare and medium.
- ☐ I can finish a thick steak in the oven.
- ☐ I rest a steak and slice it across the grain.
- ☐ I use a thermometer to check doneness.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 3 is Pan Sauces and Butters: turning the browned bits in the pan into a sauce.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1

Chapter 3 · Pan Sauces and Butters

SKILL GOAL

Turn the browned bits in the steak pan into a sauce.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

The **browned bits stuck to the pan** after you fry a steak (called the fond) are concentrated beefy flavour. Pour in a liquid and scrape them loose (this is *deglazing*), simmer it down and you have a sauce in minutes. A flavoured butter is even simpler: it melts on the hot meat into its own sauce. This chapter uses stock, mustard, cream, butter and mushrooms, and no alcohol.

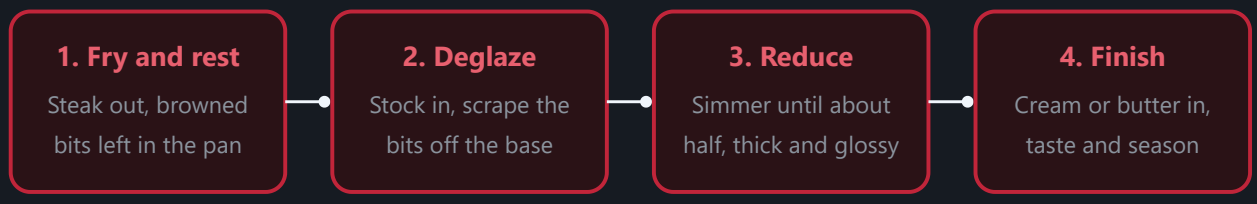


Figure 3. The brown bits stuck to the pan are concentrated flavour: dissolve them in stock and you have a sauce in five minutes.

The method

- **Don't wash the pan** after the steak: the brown bits are the flavour.
- **Lower the heat** before adding shallots or garlic so they don't burn, then deglaze with stock.
- **Scrape well** with a wooden spoon, so all the bits dissolve.
- **Reduce** until it coats the back of a spoon: wait for it, don't thicken with flour.
- **Season last,** because the sauce gets saltier as it reduces.

SAUCE	BASE	FINISH	GOOD WITH
Garlic and herb butter	Softened butter	Sliced onto hot meat	Steak, burgers
Peppercorn cream	Stock and cream	Mustard, simmered	Steak, roast beef
Stock and mustard	Stock reduced	Cold butter swirled in	Steak, roast beef
Mushroom sauce	Browned mushrooms and stock	Lemon juice, optional cream	Steak, burgers, pies

HOT PAN, HOT CREAM AND SALT

Hot pan: the pan is still very hot when you pour the stock in, so it will hiss and send up steam. Pour it in from a safe distance, keep your face back, and use a long spoon.

Hot cream and sauces: a simmering sauce is hotter than it looks and spits when it bubbles. Keep the heat low once the cream goes in, stir with a long spoon, and pour with care.

Salt: a sauce gets saltier as it reduces, because the water goes and the salt stays. Use a low-salt or unsalted stock, don't salt the sauce until the end, and taste before you add any. If it is too salty, stir in a little unsalted stock or cream, or serve it with something plain.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Garlic and herb butter

10 minutes plus 1 hour chilling | 8 slices | mixing and rolling a flavoured butter

The easiest sauce of all needs no pan: soft butter beaten with garlic and herbs, rolled into a log and sliced onto a hot steak, where it melts into a sauce. Make it ahead and keep it in the fridge.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

100 g	butter, softened
1	garlic clove, crushed or very finely grated
2 tbsp	fresh parsley, finely chopped
1 tsp	lemon juice
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Beat the butter with a fork until creamy, then mix in the garlic, parsley, lemon juice and salt.
2. Spoon the butter onto a piece of baking parchment, roll it into a log about 3 cm across and twist the ends to seal. Chill for **at least 1 hour**.
3. Slice off a coin and lay it on a freshly cooked, rested steak so it melts over the top.

RAW GARLIC, KEEPING AND ALLERGENS

Keeping flavoured butter: keep it wrapped in the fridge for up to about a week, or freeze it in slices for about a month (general guidance). Make sure the herbs and garlic are fresh and well dried, and don't use garlic in oil left at room temperature.

Allergens: beef itself is not a common allergen, but stock cubes and gravy granules often contain celery, gluten or soy, and sauces may contain milk (butter, cream) and mustard. Check every label, and swap in plant butter or gluten-free flour where needed.

LEVEL 2 · CREAM

Peppercorn cream sauce

15 minutes, in the steak pan | 2 portions | deglazing and making a cream sauce

The famous steak-house sauce, made without alcohol. Crushed peppercorns give the heat, stock gives the depth and cream turns it silky.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1	shallot, finely chopped
1 tbsp	black peppercorns, roughly crushed
150 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
100 ml	double cream
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
15 g	butter

1. After frying and resting your steaks, lower the heat under the same pan and add the butter and shallot. Cook for **2 minutes**, scraping up the browned bits, then add the peppercorns for 30 seconds.
2. Pour in the stock and simmer until reduced by about half (**about 4 minutes**). Stir in the cream and mustard and simmer for 2 minutes more, until it lightly coats the back of a spoon.
3. Taste, season carefully, and spoon over the steaks, with any resting juices stirred in.

HOT PAN, HOT CREAM AND SALT

Hot pan: the pan is still very hot when you pour the stock in, so it will hiss and send up steam. Pour it in from a safe distance, keep your face back, and use a long spoon.

Hot cream and sauces: a simmering sauce is hotter than it looks and spits when it bubbles. Keep the heat low once the cream goes in, stir with a long spoon, and pour with care.

Salt: a sauce gets saltier as it reduces, because the water goes and the salt stays. Use a low-salt or unsalted stock, don't salt the sauce until the end, and taste before you add any. If it is too salty, stir in a little unsalted stock or cream, or serve it with something plain.

> **Stock:** use a good beef stock (fresh, a pot or a cube made up with boiling water). Check the label, because stock cubes and pots often contain celery, gluten and soy.

LEVEL 2 · NO CREAM

Stock and mustard pan sauce

12 minutes, in the steak pan | 2 portions | reducing a stock-based sauce and finishing with butter

A lighter sauce with no cream: stock, a little tomato purée and mustard reduced until glossy, then swirled with cold butter for shine. Good with steak and with roast beef.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

1	shallot, finely chopped
200 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
1 tsp	tomato purée
1 tsp	wholegrain mustard
1 tsp	balsamic or cider vinegar
15 g	cold butter, diced

1. In the steak pan, cook the shallot for **2 minutes**. Stir in the tomato purée and cook for 30 seconds, then add the stock and vinegar, scraping the base.
2. Simmer for **5 to 6 minutes** until reduced by about half and a little syrupy. Stir in the mustard.
3. Take off the heat and swirl in the cold butter a piece at a time until glossy. Don't boil it again. Taste and season.

HOT PAN, REDUCING AND SALT

Hot pan: the pan is still very hot when you pour the stock in, so it will hiss and send up steam. Pour it in from a safe distance, keep your face back, and use a long spoon.

Salt: a sauce gets saltier as it reduces, because the water goes and the salt stays. Use a low-salt or unsalted stock, don't salt the sauce until the end, and taste before you add any. If it is too salty, stir in a little unsalted stock or cream, or serve it with something plain.

Stock: use a good beef stock (fresh, a pot or a cube made up with boiling water). Check the label, because stock cubes and pots often contain celery, gluten and soy.

LEVEL 3 · BUILD IT

Mushroom sauce

25 minutes | 4 portions | browning mushrooms properly, then building a sauce on them

Mushrooms hold a lot of water, so they must be browned hard first, or the sauce is grey and watery. Browned mushrooms and a reduced stock make a rich sauce that is good with steak, burgers and roast beef.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

200 g	mushrooms, sliced
1	shallot, finely chopped
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
15 g	butter
1 tsp	fresh thyme leaves
150 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
75 ml	double cream (optional)
1 tsp	lemon juice

1. Heat the oil in a wide pan over a high heat and fry the mushrooms in one layer (in batches if you need to) for **5 to 6 minutes**, without stirring too much, until golden. Add the butter, shallot and thyme and cook for 2 minutes.
2. Pour in the stock, scrape the pan and simmer for **5 minutes** until reduced by a third. Stir in the cream if you are using it and simmer for 2 minutes.
3. Add the lemon juice, taste and season. Serve hot over steak.

WILD MUSHROOMS, HOT PAN AND SALT

Mushrooms: use only mushrooms you have bought from a shop or trusted supplier, and never eat wild mushrooms unless an expert has identified them.

Hot pan: the pan is still very hot when you pour the stock in, so it will hiss and send up steam. Pour it in from a safe distance, keep your face back, and use a long spoon.

Salt: a sauce gets saltier as it reduces, because the water goes and the salt stays. Use a low-salt

> or unsalted stock, don't salt the sauce until the end, and taste before you add any. If it is too salty, stir in a little unsalted stock or cream, or serve it with something plain.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Stock or water

Deglaze two ways.

1. Fry two steaks in separate pans and deglaze one with stock and one with plain water, reducing both by half.

Look for: The stock sauce is rich and savoury; the water sauce is thin and weak. Stock adds body as well as flavour.

EXPERIMENT

How far to reduce

A third, a half and two thirds.

1. Reduce three small amounts of the same stock sauce by different amounts and taste each.

Look for: The more it reduces, the thicker and more intense it is, and the saltier. Stop when it coats a spoon and tastes balanced.

EXPERIMENT

Cold butter at the end

With and without.

1. Split a stock sauce in two, swirl cold butter into one and leave the other plain.

Look for: The buttered sauce is glossier and rounder; the plain one is sharper. Add the butter off the heat, or it can split.

EXPERIMENT

Cream or no cream

Peppercorn sauce both ways.

1. Make a peppercorn sauce with cream, and another with extra stock in place of the cream.

Look for: The cream sauce is soft, rich and mild; the stock sauce is sharper and more peppery. Both are good: it depends on the meal.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Garlic and herb butter				
Peppercorn cream sauce				
Stock and mustard sauce				
Mushroom sauce				
Stock or water				
How far to reduce				
Cold butter at the end				
Cream or no cream				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sauce is thin	Not reduced enough	Simmer longer; it thickens as it reduces

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sauce is too salty	Salty stock, reduced too far	Add unsalted stock or cream; use low-salt stock next time
Sauce tastes bitter	Burnt bits in the pan	Lower the heat before adding the shallots; don't deglaze a black pan
Sauce has split	Boiled after butter or cream	Take off the heat and whisk in a spoonful of cold cream or water
Mushroom sauce is grey and watery	Pan was crowded	Fry in batches over a high heat until golden
Garlic butter tastes harsh	Too much raw garlic	Use a smaller clove, or cook the garlic for 30 seconds first

HOT SAUCE, HOT PAN AND ALLERGENS

Hot pan: the pan is still very hot when you pour the stock in, so it will hiss and send up steam. Pour it in from a safe distance, keep your face back, and use a long spoon.

Hot cream and sauces: a simmering sauce is hotter than it looks and spits when it bubbles. Keep the heat low once the cream goes in, stir with a long spoon, and pour with care.

Allergens: beef itself is not a common allergen, but stock cubes and gravy granules often contain celery, gluten or soy, and sauces may contain milk (butter, cream) and mustard. Check every label, and swap in plant butter or gluten-free flour where needed.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can deglaze a pan and scrape up the browned bits.
- ☐ I can reduce a sauce until it coats a spoon.
- ☐ I can make a flavoured butter and keep it safely.
- ☐ I season a sauce at the end, because it gets saltier as it reduces.
- ☐ I can make a sauce with and without cream.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 4 is Roast Beef: timing, resting and carving a joint.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1

Chapter 4 · Roast Beef

SKILL GOAL

Roast, rest and carve a joint of beef, and make Yorkshire puddings and gravy.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A roast is a big piece of beef cooked in the dry heat of the oven. Because it is large, the outside is done long before the middle, so the oven starts hot to brown the outside and then drops so the heat reaches the middle gently. The joint then **rests** for 20 to 30 minutes so the juices settle, and that is also when the gravy, the Yorkshire puddings and the vegetables are finished. For roast potatoes, see Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1, chapter 3.



Figure 4. The beef rests while the Yorkshires cook and the gravy is made: resting is part of the plan.

The method

- **Take the joint out of the fridge about an hour ahead,** and salt it earlier still if you can.
- **Start hot, then turn down,** to brown the outside and cook the middle gently.
- **Use a thermometer.** It is more reliable than the clock.

- **Rest 20 to 30 minutes,** loosely covered. The temperature rises a few degrees.
- **Carve across the grain** with a sharp knife.

CUT	BEST DONENESS	TAKE OUT AT (APPROXIMATE)	NOTES
Topside or silverside	Medium-rare to medium	About 52 to 57°C	Lean: don't overcook; slice thinly
Sirloin joint	Medium-rare	About 50 to 54°C	Tender, with a fat cap
Rib joint (boneless or on the bone)	Medium-rare	About 50 to 54°C	Rich and marbled
Brisket	Slow-cooked, not pink	Cook until tender	See Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 5

HOT OVEN, RARE BEEF AND CARVING

Hot oven and hot tins: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put hot tins on a heatproof surface. A roasting tin of hot fat is heavy and hot, so never carry it across a busy kitchen, and keep children out of the way.

Whole cuts and mince: germs sit on the outside of a whole piece of beef (a steak or a joint), and searing the surface deals with them, which is why a steak can be served rare. Mince, burgers, sausages and rolled or tenderised joints can have germs all the way through, so they must be cooked right through (no pink, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre). Rare beef is not recommended for very young children, older people or anyone with a weakened immune system, and the advice for pregnancy depends on the cut, so check current NHS and FSA guidance.

Carving: carve on a board with a groove or a tray for the juices, steady the joint with a carving fork, and use a long, sharp knife. Cut across the grain in slices about 5 mm thick, using long, smooth strokes rather than sawing, and keep your free hand behind the fork.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A roast topside

About 1 hour 15 minutes plus 20 minutes resting | 4 to 6 portions | roasting a lean joint and carving it thinly

A good first roast: a lean, affordable joint that is best served pink and sliced thinly. Lean beef dries out if you overcook it, so use a thermometer and take it out early.

INGREDIENTS (5 PORTIONS)

1 kg	topside or silverside joint, tied
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 tsp	English mustard powder
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
1 pinch	black pepper
1	onion, thickly sliced

1. Take the beef out of the fridge about 45 minutes before cooking. Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan). Rub the beef with the oil, mustard powder, salt and pepper and sit it on the onion slices in a roasting tin.
2. Roast for **20 minutes**, then turn the oven down to 180°C (160°C fan) and roast for about **40 to 50 minutes more**, until the centre is about 52°C for medium-rare or 57°C for medium.
3. Lift the beef onto a board, cover loosely with foil and rest for **20 to 30 minutes**. Carve thinly across the grain.

HOT OVEN, THERMOMETER, RESTING AND CARVING

Hot oven and hot tins: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put hot tins on a heatproof surface. A roasting tin of hot fat is heavy and hot, so never carry it across a busy kitchen, and keep children out of the way.

Roasting times: the usual guide is about 20 minutes per 500 g plus 20 minutes for medium-rare, and a little more for medium, but a thermometer is better. Joints vary in shape and ovens vary in heat, so take a reading about 30 minutes before the time is up. Take the joint out about 5°C below your target, because it will rise as it rests.

Resting: after cooking, leave the beef on a warm plate or board, loosely covered with foil, for

about 5 minutes for a steak and 20 to 30 minutes for a joint. The juices settle, so they stay in the meat instead of running onto the board, and the centre rises a few degrees as it rests.

Carving: carve on a board with a groove or a tray for the juices, steady the joint with a carving fork, and use a long, sharp knife. Cut across the grain in slices about 5 mm thick, using long, smooth strokes rather than sawing, and keep your free hand behind the fork.

LEVEL 2 · THE CENTREPIECE

A rib or sirloin joint

About 1 hour 30 minutes plus 30 minutes resting | 6 to 8 portions | roasting a prime joint to a pink centre

A prime joint with a layer of fat and plenty of marbling. It is tender, so it should be served pink, and salting it ahead gives a deeply seasoned crust.

INGREDIENTS (7 PORTIONS)

1.5 kg	boneless sirloin or rib joint
2 tsp	flaked sea salt
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 tsp	black pepper
1 tbsp	plain flour
30 g	butter

1. Salt the beef all over a few hours ahead (or the night before) and leave it uncovered in the fridge. Take it out about 1 hour before cooking and pat it dry.
2. Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan). Rub the joint with oil, pepper and flour, which helps the crust. Put it in a roasting tin and roast for **20 minutes**, then turn down to 180°C (160°C fan).
3. Roast until the centre is about 50 to 52°C for rare to medium-rare (about **1 hour more** for 1.5 kg, but check). Dot with butter, rest for **30 minutes** and carve in thick slices.

HOT OVEN, THERMOMETER AND RESTING

Hot oven and hot tins: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put hot tins on a heatproof surface. A roasting tin of hot fat is heavy and hot, so never carry it across a busy kitchen, and keep children out of the way.

Roasting times: the usual guide is about 20 minutes per 500 g plus 20 minutes for medium-rare, and a little more for medium, but a thermometer is better. Joints vary in shape and ovens vary in heat, so take a reading about 30 minutes before the time is up. Take the joint out about 5°C below your target, because it will rise as it rests.

Resting: after cooking, leave the beef on a warm plate or board, loosely covered with foil, for about 5 minutes for a steak and 20 to 30 minutes for a joint. The juices settle, so they stay in the

meat instead of running onto the board, and the centre rises a few degrees as it rests.

Carving: carve on a board with a groove or a tray for the juices, steady the joint with a carving fork, and use a long, sharp knife. Cut across the grain in slices about 5 mm thick, using long, smooth strokes rather than sawing, and keep your free hand behind the fork.

Whole cuts and mince: germs sit on the outside of a whole piece of beef (a steak or a joint), and searing the surface deals with them, which is why a steak can be served rare. Mince, burgers, sausages and rolled or tenderised joints can have germs all the way through, so they must be cooked right through (no pink, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre). Rare beef is not recommended for very young children, older people or anyone with a weakened immune system, and the advice for pregnancy depends on the cut, so check current NHS and FSA guidance.

LEVEL 2 · BATTER

Yorkshire puddings

10 minutes plus 30 minutes resting and 25 minutes baking | 12 puddings

making a batter that rises in very hot fat

Yorkshire puddings are just a batter, and they rise because the fat is smoking hot and the oven is hot.

INGREDIENTS (12 PORTIONS)

100 g	plain flour
3	Lion-marked eggs
150 ml	milk
1 pinch	salt
4 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil, or beef dripping
12-hole	bun or muffin tin

1. Whisk the flour, eggs, milk and salt until smooth, add 2 tablespoons of water if it is thick, and rest it for **30 minutes**. It should be like thin cream.
2. Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan). Put a little oil in each hole of the tin and heat it in the oven for **10 minutes**, until smoking.
3. Pour the batter quickly and carefully into the holes (about two thirds full) and bake for **20 to 25 minutes** without opening the door. Serve at once.

SMOKING FAT, EGGS AND ALLERGENS

Yorkshire puddings: the fat in the tin must be smoking hot for the batter to rise, which makes it dangerous. Heat the tin in the oven, take it out with oven gloves, pour the batter in quickly and carefully and close the door at once. Don't open the oven for the first 20 minutes or they will sink.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark, and wash your hands after handling raw egg. The Yorkshire puddings in this chapter are fully baked.

Allergens: beef itself is not a common allergen, but stock cubes and gravy granules often

> contain celery, gluten or soy, and sauces may contain milk (butter, cream) and mustard. Check every label, and swap in plant butter or gluten-free flour where needed.

LEVEL 3 · GRAVY

Gravy from the tin

15 minutes | 6 portions | making gravy from the roasting juices

The best gravy comes from the roasting tin: the brown bits and the fat are what make it taste of beef. A little flour thickens it, and the cooking water from the vegetables adds flavour.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

1 tin	roasting tin with the beef juices and fat
1 tbsp	plain flour
400 ml	beef stock (low-salt), hot
100 ml	water from boiled vegetables (optional)
1 tsp	mustard or redcurrant jelly (optional)

1. After the beef comes out to rest, pour off all but about 1 tablespoon of the fat and set the tin over a low heat on the hob. Stir in the flour and cook for **1 minute**, scraping up the bits.
2. Add the hot stock a little at a time, stirring or whisking so there are no lumps, then the vegetable water if you are using it. Simmer for **8 to 10 minutes**, until it coats a spoon.
3. Stir in any resting juices from the board, add the mustard or jelly if you like, taste, season and strain into a jug.

HOT TIN, HOT GRAVY AND ALLERGENS

Hot fat in the tin: the roasting tin and the fat in it are extremely hot. Pull the shelf out to lift the tin, rest it on a heatproof surface, use dry oven gloves (a damp glove conducts heat) and keep children and pets out of the kitchen.

Hot gravy: gravy boils and splashes. Add the stock gradually, stir with a whisk or wooden spoon and pour it into a jug with care.

Allergens: beef itself is not a common allergen, but stock cubes and gravy granules often

> contain celery, gluten or soy, and sauces may contain milk (butter, cream) and mustard. Check every label, and swap in plant butter or gluten-free flour where needed.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Clock or thermometer

Check the middle.

1. Cook one joint by the time guide only, and check its centre with a thermometer at the end. Next time, cook by temperature.

Look for: The time guide gets you near, but it can be 10 to 15 degrees out. A thermometer shows how much your oven and your joint differ from the guide.

EXPERIMENT

Resting time

None, 10 and 30 minutes.

1. Carve slices from the same joint at once, after 10 minutes and after 30 minutes, and compare the juices on the board.

Look for: The unrested slices leak juice and look paler; after 30 minutes the meat is moist and evenly pink. Rest it under foil, and use the time for gravy.

EXPERIMENT

Cold or room temperature

Straight from the fridge or 1 hour out.

1. Roast two small joints the same way, one straight from the fridge and one after an hour on the side.

Look for: The room-temperature joint cooks a little more evenly. The difference is smaller than people think, but a joint that is very cold in the middle needs longer.

EXPERIMENT

Carving thickness

Thick and thin.

1. Carve some slices 1 cm thick and some 3 mm thick, across the grain.

Look for: Thin slices taste more tender, especially from a lean joint. Slices cut with the grain are chewy however thin they are.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Roast topside				
Rib or sirloin joint				
Yorkshire puddings				
Gravy from the tin				
Clock or thermometer				
Resting time				
Cold or room temperature				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Carving thickness				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Roast is grey and dry	Overcooked, or too lean for the time	Use a thermometer; take it out earlier; slice thinly
Outside burnt, middle raw	Oven too hot, or joint too cold	Start at 220°C, then turn down; bring the joint to room temperature
Meat is tough	Carved with the grain, or the wrong cut	Slice across the grain; braise tough cuts
Yorkshires didn't rise	Fat not hot enough, or the door opened	Heat the fat until smoking; don't open the door
Lumpy gravy	Stock added too fast	Add it a little at a time, or strain the gravy
Gravy is bland	No browned bits or weak stock	Scrape the tin, use a good stock and season at the end

HOT OVEN, HOT FAT AND LEFTOVERS

Hot oven and hot tins: use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put hot tins on a heatproof surface. A roasting tin of hot fat is heavy and hot, so never carry it across a busy kitchen, and keep children out of the way.

Hot fat in the tin: the roasting tin and the fat in it are extremely hot. Pull the shelf out to lift the tin, rest it on a heatproof surface, use dry oven gloves (a damp glove conducts heat) and keep children and pets out of the kitchen.

Leftovers: cool cooked beef quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover it and keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days (general guidance). Reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, and reheat it only once. Don't leave cooked beef standing at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can roast a joint and check it with a thermometer.
- ☐ I rest a joint for 20 to 30 minutes before carving.
- ☐ I can carve across the grain in thin slices.
- ☐ I can make Yorkshire puddings with very hot fat.
- ☐ I can make gravy from the roasting tin.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 5 is Braising and Stews: making tough cuts tender.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1

Chapter 5 · Braising and Stews

SKILL GOAL

Make tough cuts of beef tender with slow, gentle cooking.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Braising is cooking meat **gently in liquid, with a lid on, for a long time**. It suits the hard-working cuts (chuck, shin, brisket and short rib), which are full of connective tissue (collagen). Over hours at a low temperature the collagen melts into gelatin, so the meat becomes tender and the sauce becomes rich and glossy. The cuts are cheap, the method is forgiving and the dish improves if it is made a day ahead. Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2 goes further, with the slow cooker and slow-cooked world dishes.

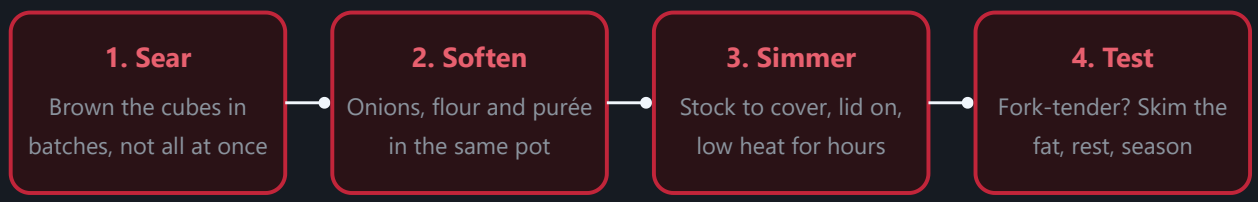


Figure 5. Sear for flavour, simmer for tenderness: tough cuts become tender because time melts their connective tissue.

The method

- **Pick a tough cut,** and cut it into large pieces (about 4 cm) so it doesn't dry out.
- **Dry and brown the beef in batches.** A crowded pan steams the meat and it turns grey.
- **Scrape up the bits** when you add the liquid. They are flavour.
- **Simmer, never boil:** keep the liquid just bubbling, with a lid on, in a low oven or on the lowest hob heat.

- **Cook until tender,** not for a set time, then skim the fat and season.

CUT	COOKING TIME (APPROXIMATE)	RESULT	NOTES
Chuck or braising steak	2 to 2½ hours	Tender, in chunks	The everyday stewing cut
Shin	2½ to 3 hours	Very tender and rich	Gelatinous: great sauce
Short rib	About 3 hours	Falling off the bone	Fatty: skim the sauce
Brisket	3 to 4 hours	Sliceable or shredded	Cook whole, then slice

HOT POTS, TENDER MEAT AND COOLING

Hot pot and hot steam: a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.

Tough cuts take time: braising beef is done when it is tender, not when a timer rings. If a fork doesn't slide in easily, it needs longer. Simmering gently is better than boiling hard, which toughens the meat.

Cooling a big pot: a large pot of stew stays warm for hours, which is when germs multiply. If you aren't eating it straight away, divide it into shallow containers, cool it within 1 to 2 hours, then cover and chill. Keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days or freeze it for up to about 3 months (general guidance), and reheat it until it is steaming hot all the way through.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A simple beef casserole

25 minutes plus 2 hours cooking | 4 portions | searing, simmering and testing for tenderness

The basic braise: brown cubes of a tough cut, add vegetables and stock, cover, and let a low oven do the work. By the end, the meat falls apart with a fork and the sauce is rich and glossy.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

800 g	braising or chuck steak, in 4 cm cubes
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
2	onions, roughly chopped
3	carrots, in thick slices
2 tbsp	plain flour
1 tbsp	tomato purée
500 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
2	bay leaves
1 pinch	salt and black pepper

1. Heat the oven to 160°C (140°C fan). Pat the beef dry and season it. Brown it in the oil in a large ovenproof pot over a high heat, in **2 or 3 batches** so it browns rather than steams, then set it aside.
2. In the same pot, cook the onions and carrots for 5 minutes, stir in the flour and tomato purée for 1 minute, then add the stock a little at a time, scraping the base. Return the beef, add the bay leaves and bring to a simmer.
3. Cover and cook in the oven for **2 to 2½ hours**, until a piece of beef breaks easily with a fork. Skim off any fat, season and serve.

> HOT POT, TENDER BEEF AND SALT
>
> **Hot pot and hot steam:** a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.

Tough cuts take time: braising beef is done when it is tender, not when a timer rings. If a fork doesn't slide in easily, it needs longer. Simmering gently is better than boiling hard, which toughens the meat.

Salt: stews and sauces get saltier as they reduce, because the water goes and the salt stays. Use low-salt stock, season only at the end, and taste before adding any.

Flour: plain flour is wheat, so a stew thickened with it isn't gluten-free. Cornflour, or a stew with no flour that is reduced instead, makes a gluten-free version.

LEVEL 2 · TOPPING

Beef stew with dumplings

20 minutes on top of the casserole, with 20 minutes cooking | 4 portions | making dumplings and cooking them on a stew

A stew with fluffy suet dumplings floating on top. They are quick to make and soak up the gravy. The stew must be gently bubbling, not boiling hard, when they go in.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1 batch	beef casserole (above), simmering
100 g	self-raising flour
50 g	vegetable suet
1 pinch	salt
1 tbsp	chopped fresh parsley
5 tbsp	cold water, about

1. About 35 minutes before the casserole is ready, mix the flour, suet, salt and parsley, then stir in just enough cold water to make a soft, slightly sticky dough. Shape into 8 small balls with floured hands.
2. Take the casserole out and set it on a heatproof surface (use oven gloves). Check the stew is simmering, add a splash of hot stock if it looks dry, and sit the dumplings on top.
3. Return the pot to the oven, with the lid on, for **20 minutes**, until the dumplings are puffed and cooked through. Serve at once.

HOT POT, SUET AND ALLERGENS

Hot pot and hot steam: a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.

Flour: plain flour is wheat, so a stew thickened with it isn't gluten-free. Cornflour, or a stew with no flour that is reduced instead, makes a gluten-free version.

> **Suet:** traditional suet is beef fat. Vegetable suet is used here, so it suits vegetarian diets, but check the label for allergens such as wheat flour.

LEVEL 2 · ON THE BONE

Braised short ribs or shin

30 minutes plus 3 hours cooking | 4 portions | braising bone-in cuts until they fall apart

Short ribs and shin on the bone are cheap, rich and gelatinous, and they give a deeply flavoured sauce. They need long, gentle cooking, and the sauce is skimmed at the end to remove excess fat.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1.2 kg	beef short ribs, or 1 kg shin on the bone
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	onion, roughly chopped
2	carrots, roughly chopped
2	celery sticks, roughly chopped
2 tbsp	tomato purée
500 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
1 tbsp	balsamic vinegar
2	bay leaves

1. Heat the oven to 150°C (130°C fan). Season the beef and brown it all over in the oil in a large ovenproof pot, in batches, then set it aside.
2. Cook the onion, carrot and celery in the same pot for 5 minutes, add the tomato purée for 1 minute, then the stock, vinegar and bay leaves. Return the beef, bring to a simmer, cover and cook for about **3 hours**, turning once, until the meat is falling off the bone.
3. Lift the meat out, skim the fat from the sauce, and boil the sauce hard for 5 minutes to thicken it. Return the beef, season and serve with mash.

> **HOT POT, BONES AND COOLING**
>
> **Hot pot and hot steam:** a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.
>
> **Tough cuts take time:** braising beef is done when it is tender, not when a timer rings. If a fork

doesn't slide in easily, it needs longer. Simmering gently is better than boiling hard, which toughens the meat.

Cooling a big pot: a large pot of stew stays warm for hours, which is when germs multiply. If you aren't eating it straight away, divide it into shallow containers, cool it within 1 to 2 hours, then cover and chill. Keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days or freeze it for up to about 3 months (general guidance), and reheat it until it is steaming hot all the way through.

Bones: cooked bones can splinter, so lift the meat off the bones before serving small children and check for small fragments.

LEVEL 3 · LID

A beef and gravy pie

20 minutes plus 30 minutes baking | 4 to 6 portions | turning a stew into a pie with a pastry lid

A casserole with a pastry lid is a pie. The filling must be cool before the pastry goes on, or the pastry melts and turns soggy. Ready-rolled pastry makes it easy: Cooking Skills: Pastry 1 (planned) will cover making your own.

INGREDIENTS (5 PORTIONS)

1 batch	beef casserole, cooled (above)
1	sheet of ready-rolled puff pastry (about 320 g)
1	egg (Lion-marked), beaten
1	pie dish (about 1.5 litres)
1 tbsp	plain flour, for dusting

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan). Spoon the cooled, thick casserole into the pie dish (the gravy should be thick, not runny) and brush the rim with beaten egg.
2. Lay the pastry over the top, press it onto the rim, trim the edge, cut a small slit in the middle to let the steam out and brush with beaten egg.
3. Bake for **25 to 30 minutes**, until the pastry is puffed and golden and the filling is steaming hot all the way through. Rest for 5 minutes and serve.

HOT FILLING, STEAM AND EGGS

Hot pot and hot steam: a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Cook the egg until the white is set, and until the yolk is firm if you are serving anyone in a more vulnerable group.

Cooling a big pot: a large pot of stew stays warm for hours, which is when germs multiply. If you aren't eating it straight away, divide it into shallow containers, cool it within 1 to 2 hours,

then cover and chill. Keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days or freeze it for up to about 3 months (general guidance), and reheat it until it is steaming hot all the way through.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Sear or no sear

Brown and plain.

1. Make two small casseroles, browning the beef for one and putting the other in raw.

Look for: The browned stew has a darker colour and a deeper, roasted taste; the unbrowned one is paler and flatter. Browning is the biggest flavour step.

EXPERIMENT

Oven or hob

Two methods.

1. Cook two small casseroles for the same time, one in a 150°C oven and one on the lowest heat on the hob.

Look for: The oven surrounds the pot with an even heat and needs no stirring. On the hob the bottom heats more and can catch, so it needs more attention.

EXPERIMENT

Cooking time

2 hours and 3 hours.

1. Cook two batches of the same stew and take one out at 2 hours and one at 3.

Look for: At 2 hours the meat holds together; at 3 hours it falls apart and the sauce is richer. Beyond that, lean cuts can go stringy and dry.

EXPERIMENT

Size of the pieces

Small and large.

1. Cut one batch of chuck into 2 cm cubes and another into 5 cm cubes and cook them together.

Look for: The small cubes turn dry and stringy; the big ones stay juicy and tender. For a braise, cut big.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Beef casserole				
Stew with dumplings				
Short ribs or shin				
Beef and gravy pie				
Sear or no sear				
Oven or hob				
Cooking time				
Size of the pieces				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Meat is tough	Not cooked long enough, or boiled hard	Cook longer, at a low simmer, and test with a fork
Meat is dry and stringy	Lean cut or pieces too small	Use chuck or shin and cut it into big pieces

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sauce is thin	Too much stock or not reduced	Remove the lid for the last 20 minutes, or boil the sauce on the hob
Sauce is greasy	Fatty cut	Skim with a spoon, or chill and lift off the set fat
Grey, bland stew	Beef not browned	Dry the beef and brown it in batches
Soggy pie lid	Filling still hot	Cool the filling completely first

HOT POTS, COOLING AND LEFTOVERS

Hot pot and hot steam: a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.

Cooling a big pot: a large pot of stew stays warm for hours, which is when germs multiply. If you aren't eating it straight away, divide it into shallow containers, cool it within 1 to 2 hours, then cover and chill. Keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days or freeze it for up to about 3 months (general guidance), and reheat it until it is steaming hot all the way through.

Leftovers: cool cooked beef quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover it and keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days (general guidance). Reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, and reheat it only once. Don't leave cooked beef standing at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can brown beef in batches.
- ☐ I can simmer a stew gently and test it for tenderness.
- ☐ I can make dumplings and cook them on a stew.
- ☐ I can skim and thicken the sauce.
- ☐ I cool and store leftover stew safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 6 is Mince: bolognese, chilli, cottage pie and stuffed peppers.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1

Chapter 6 · Mince

SKILL GOAL

Cook mince thoroughly and safely, and make four everyday meals.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Mince is beef that has been **ground into small pieces**. It is cheap, quick and takes up flavours, so it is behind the most popular home meals. Because the surface of the meat is spread all through it, mince must always be cooked right through. Browning gives flavour, vegetables add moisture and sweetness, and a gentle simmer brings it together. For burgers and meatballs, see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2.



Figure 6. Mince is cheap and quick, but it has to be cooked right through and cooled quickly.

The method

- **Choose the fat:** about 10% fat for sauces and chilli, 5% for pies and stuffings (drain fat if greasy), 15 to 20% for burgers.
- **Brown properly:** don't stir too much, and let it turn golden. Grey mince makes a bland sauce.
- **Add flavour:** tomato purée, herbs and spices, fried briefly.
- **Simmer gently** so the sauce thickens and the flavours blend.

- **Cool and chill leftovers fast,** and reheat until steaming hot.

DISH	FAT %	COOK	SERVE WITH
Bolognese	10%	Simmer 45 minutes	Spaghetti or other pasta
Chilli con carne	10%	Simmer 30 to 40 minutes	Rice, potatoes or tortillas
Cottage pie	5 to 10%	Simmer, then bake 25 minutes	Greens or peas
Stuffed peppers	5 to 10%	Brown, then bake 40 minutes	Salad or rice

MINCE, FREEZING AND COOLING

Mince must be cooked through: germs can be all the way through mince, not just on the surface. Cook it until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Wash your hands, boards and utensils after handling it and don't taste it raw.

Freezing and thawing: freeze raw or cooked mince dishes in small, flat, labelled bags or boxes. Thaw them overnight in the fridge, not on the worktop, and cook or reheat until steaming hot all through. Don't refreeze raw beef that has thawed, though you can freeze it again once it has been cooked.

Cooling a big pot: a large pot of stew stays warm for hours, which is when germs multiply. If you aren't eating it straight away, divide it into shallow containers, cool it within 1 to 2 hours, then cover and chill. Keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days or freeze it for up to about 3 months (general guidance), and reheat it until it is steaming hot all the way through.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Spaghetti bolognese

20 minutes plus 45 minutes simmering | 4 portions | browning mince and building a meat sauce

The classic meat sauce: mince browned until golden, softened vegetables, tomatoes and a long gentle simmer. It tastes even better the next day.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	beef mince (10% fat)
1	onion, finely chopped
1	carrot, finely chopped
1	celery stick, finely chopped
2	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp	tomato purée
400 g	tin of chopped tomatoes
200 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
1 tsp	dried oregano
320 g	spaghetti

1. Heat a little oil in a large pan and cook the onion, carrot and celery for 8 minutes until soft, adding the garlic for the last minute. Move them to the side and brown the mince in the pan, breaking it up with a spoon, for **8 to 10 minutes** until it is golden and no pink remains.
2. Stir in the tomato purée for 1 minute, then add the tomatoes, stock and oregano. Simmer gently, partly covered, for **45 minutes**, stirring now and then. Season at the end.
3. Cook the spaghetti in plenty of salted boiling water until just tender, drain and toss with the sauce.

> **MINCE, HOT SAUCE AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Mince must be cooked through:** germs can be all the way through mince, not just on the surface. Cook it until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C.

Wash your hands, boards and utensils after handling it and don't taste it raw.

Hot pot and hot steam: a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.

Allergens: beef itself is not a common allergen, but stock cubes and gravy granules often contain celery, gluten or soy, and sauces may contain milk (butter, cream) and mustard. Check every label, and swap in plant butter or gluten-free flour where needed.

LEVEL 2 · SPICE

Chilli con carne

20 minutes plus 40 minutes simmering | 4 portions | building flavour with spices

Mince, beans and spices in a thick tomato sauce. Frying the spices briefly in the pan brings out their flavour. Start mild: you can always add more chilli, but you can't take it out.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	beef mince (10% fat)
1	onion, chopped
2	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tsp	ground cumin
1 tsp	smoked paprika
1 tsp	mild chilli powder (to taste)
1 tbsp	tomato purée
400 g	tin of chopped tomatoes
400 g	tin of kidney beans, drained and rinsed
200 ml	beef stock (low-salt)

1. Brown the mince in a large pan for **8 to 10 minutes**, then add the onion and cook for 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic, cumin, paprika and chilli and cook for 1 minute.
2. Add the tomato purée, tomatoes and stock and simmer gently for **30 minutes**. Add the beans and simmer for 10 minutes more, until thick.
3. Taste and season. Serve with rice, baked potatoes or tortillas, and soured cream if you like.

MINCE, BEANS, SPICES AND HEAT

Mince must be cooked through: germs can be all the way through mince, not just on the surface. Cook it until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Wash your hands, boards and utensils after handling it and don't taste it raw.

Kidney beans: canned kidney beans are already cooked, so drain and rinse them. Dried kidney

beans are poisonous unless they are soaked and then boiled hard for at least 10 minutes, so don't use them raw or in a slow cooker.

Chilli powder: it can sting skin and eyes, so wash your hands before touching your face, and add heat in small steps. Serve very hot dishes with something cooling for children.

Rice: cooked rice can carry bacteria that survive cooking. Use freshly cooked rice, or cool it within an hour, keep it in the fridge and use it within a day, and reheat it until steaming hot.

LEVEL 2 · TOPPED

Cottage pie

30 minutes plus 25 minutes baking | 4 to 6 portions | making a mince filling with a mashed potato topping

Mince in gravy under a lid of mash, baked until golden. The filling must be thick, not runny, or the mash sinks into it. For the mash, see Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1, chapter 2.

INGREDIENTS (5 PORTIONS)

500 g	beef mince (10% fat)
1	onion, finely chopped
2	carrots, finely chopped
1 tbsp	plain flour
1 tbsp	tomato purée
300 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
800 g	floury potatoes (such as Maris Piper), peeled and chopped
50 g	butter
100 ml	milk, warmed

1. Boil the potatoes in salted water for about 15 minutes until tender, drain and mash with the butter and warm milk. Meanwhile brown the mince for 8 to 10 minutes, add the onion and carrot and cook for 5 minutes.
2. Stir in the flour and tomato purée, add the stock, and simmer for **15 to 20 minutes** until thick. Season, spoon into a baking dish and top with the mash, rough up the surface with a fork.
3. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan) and bake for **25 minutes**, until golden on top and bubbling hot all through.

> **MINCE, HOT FILLING AND HOT MASH**
>
> **Mince must be cooked through:** germs can be all the way through mince, not just on the surface. Cook it until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Wash your hands, boards and utensils after handling it and don't taste it raw.
>
> **Hot pot and hot steam:** a heavy casserole dish or pan of hot liquid is heavy and scalding. Use

oven gloves, lift the lid away from your face so the steam doesn't burn you, keep the handles turned in and never carry a full pot across a busy kitchen.

Cooling a big pot: a large pot of stew stays warm for hours, which is when germs multiply. If you aren't eating it straight away, divide it into shallow containers, cool it within 1 to 2 hours, then cover and chill. Keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days or freeze it for up to about 3 months (general guidance), and reheat it until it is steaming hot all the way through.

LEVEL 3 · STUFFED

Stuffed peppers

25 minutes plus 40 minutes baking | 4 portions | filling and baking vegetables with a meat-and-rice mixture

Peppers stuffed with mince, rice and tomato, topped with cheese. The mince is browned first, so it only needs the oven to finish the peppers and melt the cheese. For a meat-free version, use mushroom and lentils.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

4	large peppers, halved lengthways and deseeded
300 g	beef mince (10% fat)
1	onion, finely chopped
2	garlic cloves, crushed
150 g	cooked rice, freshly cooked
200 ml	passata
1 tsp	dried oregano
50 g	cheddar, grated

1. Heat the oven to 190°C (170°C fan). Brown the mince for 8 to 10 minutes, add the onion and garlic and cook for 5 minutes, then stir in the rice, passata and oregano and season.
2. Put the pepper halves in a baking dish and fill them with the mixture. Cover with foil and bake for **30 minutes**.
3. Remove the foil, scatter the cheese over and bake for **10 minutes more**, until the peppers are soft and the cheese is golden.

> **MINCE, RICE AND HOT OVEN**
>
> **Mince must be cooked through:** germs can be all the way through mince, not just on the surface. Cook it until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Wash your hands, boards and utensils after handling it and don't taste it raw.
>
> **Rice:** cooked rice can carry bacteria that survive cooking. Use freshly cooked rice, or cool it within an hour, keep it in the fridge and use it within a day, and reheat it until steaming hot.

> **Hot oven and hot tins:** use oven gloves, open the door away from your face, and put hot tins on a heatproof surface. A roasting tin of hot fat is heavy and hot, so never carry it across a busy kitchen, and keep children out of the way.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Browning time

Grey and golden.

1. Make two small batches of meat sauce, one with the mince cooked until grey and one browned until golden.

Look for: The golden batch tastes deeper and meatier. Grey mince tastes plain: browning is where the flavour starts.

EXPERIMENT

Fat percentage

5% and 20%.

1. Cook 5% fat mince and 20% fat mince the same way and compare the sauces.

Look for: The lean mince is drier and firmer; the fatty one is richer but greasy unless you drain it. Ten per cent is a good compromise.

EXPERIMENT

Hidden vegetables

Grated carrot and mushroom.

1. Make one batch with grated carrot or finely chopped mushrooms stirred into the mince, and one plain.

Look for: The batch with vegetables is moister and sweeter, goes further and has less meat per portion. It works especially well in pies and sauces.

EXPERIMENT

Freezing and reheating

Fresh, then frozen.

1. Freeze a portion of bolognese flat for a few days, thaw it in the fridge and reheat it until steaming hot.

Look for: Thawed sauce may be a little thinner, so simmer it for a few minutes. Many people think sauces taste better after a day, so make extra.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Spaghetti bolognese				
Chilli con carne				
Cottage pie				
Stuffed peppers				
Browning time				
Fat percentage				
Hidden vegetables				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Freezing and reheating				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Grey, bland mince	Pan crowded or not hot	Brown in two batches over a high heat
Greasy sauce	High-fat mince	Spoon off fat, or choose leaner mince
Watery sauce	Not simmered long enough	Simmer uncovered until thick
Pie filling runny	Too much liquid	Reduce the filling before adding the topping
Chilli too hot	Too much chilli	Add more tomatoes or beans, and serve with yogurt or soured cream
Mince still pink	Not cooked through	Cook until no pink remains and it is steaming hot

MINCE, COOLING AND REHEATING

Mince must be cooked through: germs can be all the way through mince, not just on the surface. Cook it until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Wash your hands, boards and utensils after handling it and don't taste it raw.

Cooling a big pot: a large pot of stew stays warm for hours, which is when germs multiply. If you aren't eating it straight away, divide it into shallow containers, cool it within 1 to 2 hours, then cover and chill. Keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days or freeze it for up to about 3 months (general guidance), and reheat it until it is steaming hot all the way through.

Freezing and thawing: freeze raw or cooked mince dishes in small, flat, labelled bags or boxes. Thaw them overnight in the fridge, not on the worktop, and cook or reheat until steaming hot all through. Don't refreeze raw beef that has thawed, though you can freeze it again once it has been cooked.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can brown mince until golden.
- ☐ I know mince must be cooked right through.
- ☐ I can build a meat sauce, chilli and a cottage pie.
- ☐ I can freeze and reheat mince dishes safely.
- ☐ I can choose the fat percentage for the dish.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 7 is Quick Beef Dishes: stir-fries, steak sandwiches, beef salad and using up leftover roast beef.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1

Chapter 7 · Quick Beef Dishes

SKILL GOAL

Slice and cook beef fast, and use up leftovers.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Beef does not always need hours. **Thin slices of a tender cut cook in a minute or two**, so a stir-fry, a sandwich or a salad can be ready in 20 minutes. The rule is the same each time: choose a cut that is tender enough, slice it thinly across the grain, cook it hot and fast and don't let it stand. Leftover roast beef can be turned into hash, sandwiches or a salad with only a little more work.

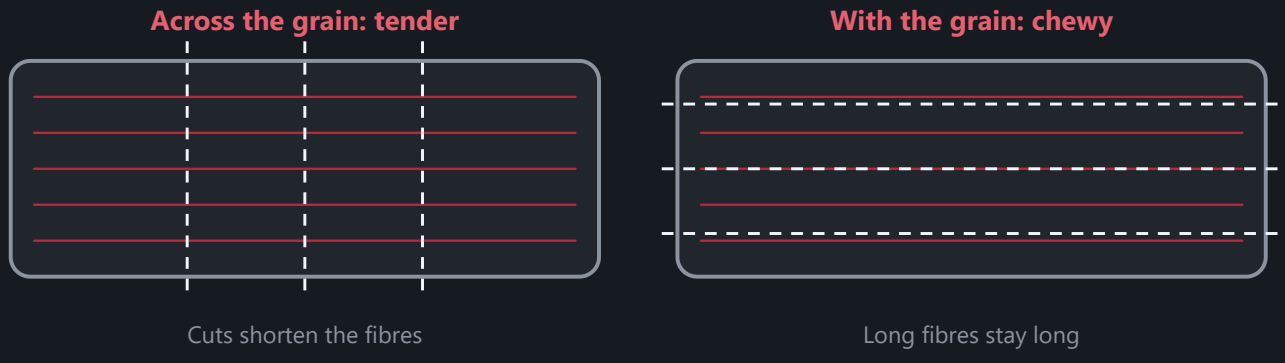


Figure 7. Look for the lines in the meat and cut across them: this is the single biggest difference between tender and chewy.

The method

- **Slice across the grain,** thinly (2 to 4 mm for a stir-fry). Freezing the steak for 30 minutes first makes it easier to slice.
- **Cook hot and fast,** in batches. A crowded pan steams the beef.
- **Have everything ready** before you start, because it cooks in minutes.

- **Rest steak before slicing** for a sandwich or salad.
- **Reheat leftovers until steaming hot,** and only once.

DISH	CUT	COOK	COST
Stir-fry	Sirloin, rump or flank, thin	1 to 2 minutes, in batches	Low to medium
Steak sandwich	Rump or sirloin	2 minutes a side, rest, slice	Medium
Beef salad	Sirloin or rump	2 to 3 minutes a side, rest, slice	Medium
Roast beef hash	Leftover roast	10 minutes, until steaming hot	Very low

HOT PANS, RARE BEEF AND LEFTOVERS

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Whole cuts and mince: germs sit on the outside of a whole piece of beef (a steak or a joint), and searing the surface deals with them, which is why a steak can be served rare. Mince, burgers, sausages and rolled or tenderised joints can have germs all the way through, so they must be cooked right through (no pink, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre). Rare beef is not recommended for very young children, older people or anyone with a weakened immune system, and the advice for pregnancy depends on the cut, so check current NHS and FSA guidance.

Leftovers: cool cooked beef quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover it and keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days (general guidance). Reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, and reheat it only once. Don't leave cooked beef standing at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Beef stir-fry

20 minutes plus 15 minutes marinating | 2 portions | slicing thinly and cooking fast over a high heat

Thin slices of beef cook in a minute or two. A pinch of bicarbonate of soda in a short marinade tenderises the meat (this is called velveting), and the key is to cook it fast and in batches. For more on stir-frying vegetables, see Cooking Skills: Vegetables 1, chapter 4.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

300 g	sirloin or rump steak, sliced very thinly across the grain
¼ tsp	bicarbonate of soda
1 tsp	cornflour
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	red pepper, sliced
150 g	broccoli florets
2	garlic cloves, sliced
1 tbsp	fresh ginger, grated
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	honey
1 tbsp	water

1. Toss the beef with the bicarbonate and cornflour and leave for **15 minutes**, then rinse it briefly, pat it dry and keep it separate.
2. Heat a wok or large pan until very hot, add half the oil and stir-fry the beef for **1 to 2 minutes**, then remove. Add the rest of the oil and stir-fry the pepper and broccoli for 3 minutes, with the garlic and ginger for the last 30 seconds.
3. Return the beef, add the soy sauce, honey and water and toss for 1 minute until glossy. Serve at once with rice or noodles.

HOT PAN, BICARBONATE AND SOY

Hot pan and hot oil: stir-frying uses very high heat and spitting oil. Dry the beef and vegetables first, keep everything ready before you start, use a long spoon and keep children

away from the hob.

Bicarbonate of soda: only a pinch is used to soften the meat. Too much leaves a soapy taste, so measure it and rinse the beef well before cooking.

Soy and wheat: soy sauce contains soy and wheat. Tamari is usually gluten-free (check the label), and coconut aminos are a soy-free swap.

Raw beef hygiene: keep raw meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge in a covered dish so it can't drip onto other food, use a separate board and knife for raw meat (or wash them in hot soapy water before they touch anything else), and wash your hands for 20 seconds after handling it. Don't rinse raw beef under the tap: it spreads germs around the sink and does nothing to remove them. Cook or freeze it by the use-by date.

LEVEL 2 · SANDWICH

A steak sandwich

25 minutes | 2 portions | frying a steak and slicing it for a sandwich

A thin steak, sliced across the grain, with sweet fried onions, mustard and peppery rocket in crusty bread. Slicing thinly is what makes it tender enough to bite through.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	rump or sirloin steaks, about 150 g each
2	onions, thinly sliced
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 tsp	wholegrain mustard
2	ciabatta rolls or small baguettes
1 handful	handful of rocket
1 pinch	salt and black pepper

1. Fry the onions slowly in half the oil with a pinch of salt for **15 minutes**, until soft and golden.
2. Pat the steaks dry and season. In a very hot pan with the rest of the oil, cook the steaks for **2 minutes a side**, then rest for 5 minutes and slice thinly across the grain.
3. Split the rolls, spread them with the mustard and fill with onions, steak slices and rocket. Pour any steak juices over the meat and serve.

HOT PAN, RESTING AND SLICING

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Resting: after cooking, leave the beef on a warm plate or board, loosely covered with foil, for about 5 minutes for a steak and 20 to 30 minutes for a joint. The juices settle, so they stay in the meat instead of running onto the board, and the centre rises a few degrees as it rests.

> **Knife safety:** slice and carve on a stable board (a damp cloth underneath stops it sliding) with a sharp knife, because a blunt knife slips. Keep your guiding fingertips tucked back, and let the knife do the work. A carving fork or tongs holds the joint steady.

LEVEL 2 · SALAD

Beef salad with a warm dressing

25 minutes | 2 portions | serving warm beef over salad

Thin slices of warm, pink beef over crisp leaves with a mustard and lemon dressing. The dressing is shaken in a jar, and a spoonful of the steak juices goes into it.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	sirloin or rump steaks, about 200 g each
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
100 g	mixed salad leaves
150 g	cherry tomatoes, halved
½	cucumber, sliced
2 tbsp	olive oil
1 tbsp	lemon juice
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
1 tsp	honey

1. Season and fry the steaks in the oil for 2 to 3 minutes a side. Rest for 5 minutes, then slice thinly across the grain.
2. Shake the olive oil, lemon juice, mustard and honey in a jar with a pinch of salt and add a spoonful of the steak juices.
3. Arrange the leaves, tomatoes and cucumber on plates, pile the warm steak slices on top and drizzle with the dressing.

HOT PAN, RAW SALAD AND RARE BEEF

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Whole cuts and mince: germs sit on the outside of a whole piece of beef (a steak or a joint),

and searing the surface deals with them, which is why a steak can be served rare. Mince, burgers, sausages and rolled or tenderised joints can have germs all the way through, so they must be cooked right through (no pink, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre). Rare beef is not recommended for very young children, older people or anyone with a weakened immune system, and the advice for pregnancy depends on the cut, so check current NHS and FSA guidance.

Salad: wash salad leaves and vegetables before use, even if the bag says ready to eat, and keep the salad cold until serving.

LEVEL 3 · LEFTOVERS

Roast beef hash

30 minutes | 2 portions | turning leftover roast beef into a new meal

A crisp, savoury hash of leftover beef, potatoes and onion, topped with a fried egg. Use beef that was cooled quickly and kept in the fridge for no more than 2 days.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

300 g	leftover cooked roast beef, diced
400 g	cooked potatoes, diced
1	onion, chopped
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 tsp	wholegrain mustard
2	Lion-marked eggs

1. Heat the oil in a large frying pan and fry the onion for 5 minutes. Add the potatoes and fry for **8 to 10 minutes** until golden and crisp, turning only now and then.
2. Add the beef and mustard and cook for **5 minutes**, until the beef is steaming hot all the way through.
3. Fry the eggs in a second pan until the white is set. Serve the hash topped with the eggs.

LEFTOVERS, REHEATING AND EGGS

Leftovers: cool cooked beef quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover it and keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days (general guidance). Reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, and reheat it only once. Don't leave cooked beef standing at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Eggs: use eggs with the British Lion mark and wash your hands after handling raw egg. Cook

> the egg until the white is set, and until the yolk is firm if you are serving anyone in a more vulnerable group.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Slice thickness

2 mm and 8 mm.

1. Slice the same steak thinly and thickly across the grain, stir-fry both for the same time and compare.

Look for: The thin slices are tender and cooked through; the thick ones are chewier and tougher. Thin slices cook in a minute, which is why a stir-fry is quick.

EXPERIMENT

Marinating time

None, 15 minutes and 2 hours.

1. Marinate slices in soy sauce and a little cornflour for none, 15 minutes and 2 hours (in the fridge) and fry them.

Look for: A short marinade seasons the surface; a long one makes it saltier and a little firmer. Don't marinate longer than a few hours, and always in the fridge.

EXPERIMENT

Pan size

Crowded and in batches.

1. Stir-fry 300 g of beef all at once in a small pan, and in two batches in a large pan.

Look for: The crowded pan steams the beef, which turns grey and watery. Two batches in a very hot pan give a brown, glossy result.

EXPERIMENT

Bicarbonate of soda

With and without.

1. Prepare two portions of thin beef, one with a pinch of bicarbonate for 15 minutes, rinsed, and one plain, and stir-fry both.

Look for: The treated beef is softer and silkier. Rinse it well, as too much bicarbonate leaves a soapy taste.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Beef stir-fry				
Steak sandwich				
Beef salad				
Roast beef hash				
Slice thickness				
Marinating time				
Pan size				
Bicarbonate of soda				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Chewy stir-fry beef	Sliced with the grain, or overcooked	Slice across the grain; cook for 1 to 2 minutes only
Grey, watery stir-fry	Pan crowded or not hot	Cook the beef in batches in a very hot pan

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Tough steak in the sandwich	Cut in thick slices	Rest, then slice thinly across the grain
Soapy taste	Too much bicarbonate	Use only a pinch per 300 g and rinse the beef
Hash is soggy	Potatoes not dry or too much stirring	Dry the potatoes and fry without turning too often
Leftover beef is dry	Overcooked in the first place	Slice thinly and add to something saucy

HOT PANS, SOY AND LEFTOVERS

Hot pan and hot oil: stir-frying uses very high heat and spitting oil. Dry the beef and vegetables first, keep everything ready before you start, use a long spoon and keep children away from the hob.

Soy and wheat: soy sauce contains soy and wheat. Tamari is usually gluten-free (check the label), and coconut aminos are a soy-free swap.

Leftovers: cool cooked beef quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover it and keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days (general guidance). Reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, and reheat it only once. Don't leave cooked beef standing at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can slice beef thinly across the grain.
- ☐ I can stir-fry beef in batches in a hot pan.
- ☐ I can make a steak sandwich and a beef salad.
- ☐ I can turn leftover roast beef into a new meal safely.
- ☐ I know when to rest meat and when to serve it at once.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 8 is A Beef Dinner: planning and serving a full meal.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1

Chapter 8 · A Beef Dinner

SKILL GOAL

Plan, time and serve a full beef dinner.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A beef dinner brings together everything in this course: **choosing the cut, cooking it right, making a sauce, and timing it all**. The real new skill is planning. A calm dinner comes from a written timeline, from making as much as possible ahead, and from knowing that the beef needs to rest while the final jobs are done.



Figure 8. Plan from the plate backwards: the make-ahead jobs go first, and the beef rests while you finish the gravy.

The method

- **Choose the dish to fit the time:** steak for a quick evening, a roast for a leisurely Sunday, a casserole for making ahead.
- **Write a timeline from serving time backwards.**

- **Make ahead what you can:** stews, sauces, batter, prepared vegetables.
- **Use the resting time** for gravy, Yorkshires and vegetables.
- **Warm the plates** and serve hot food quickly.

DINNER	TIME ON THE DAY	MAKE AHEAD	SERVES
Steak night	45 minutes	Garlic butter	2
Sunday roast	3 to 4 hours	Batter, prepared vegetables	6 to 8
Casserole supper	30 minutes	The whole casserole	6 or more
Quick beef dish (chapter 7)	20 minutes	Slice and marinate	2 to 4

HOT FOOD, RAW BEEF AND ALLERGENS

Keeping food hot and cold: when cooking for guests, keep hot food above about 63°C until it is served (in a warm oven or covered), and keep cold food in the fridge until the last moment. Don't leave food at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Raw beef hygiene: keep raw meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge in a covered dish so it can't drip onto other food, use a separate board and knife for raw meat (or wash them in hot soapy water before they touch anything else), and wash your hands for 20 seconds after handling it. Don't rinse raw beef under the tap: it spreads germs around the sink and does nothing to remove them. Cook or freeze it by the use-by date.

Allergen cards: ask guests about allergies and diets before you plan. Note what is in each dish (wheat in the Yorkshires and gravy, milk and mustard in the sauces, celery in the stock), and keep a plain, safe option for anyone who needs one.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Steak night for two

45 minutes | 2 portions | timing a steak, chips and salad to arrive together

The simplest dinner party: steak, chips and salad. Start the chips first, because they take longest, and cook the steaks last so they are hot and juicy.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	sirloin or rump steaks, about 250 g each
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
2 slices	garlic and herb butter (Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 3)
400 g	oven chips or home-made chips (Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1, chapter 4)
100 g	green salad leaves
1 tbsp	olive oil and a squeeze of lemon, for the salad

1. Start the chips (follow the packet, or your own recipe). Dress the salad leaves just before serving. Take the steaks out of the fridge 20 minutes before cooking.
2. When the chips have about 10 minutes left, season the steaks and fry them in the oil for 2 to 3 minutes a side. Rest them for 5 minutes on a warm plate with a slice of garlic and herb butter on each.
3. Serve at once: steak, chips and salad on warm plates, with the buttery juices spooned over.

HOT PAN, HOT OIL, RAW BEEF AND TIMING

Hot pan and hot fat: fat spits and the pan gets very hot. Dry the steak well first, lay it in away from you, use tongs rather than your fingers, keep the handle turned in and stay with the pan. If fat catches fire, never use water: turn off the heat and cover the pan with a lid or a damp cloth. Open a window or use the extractor fan, because searing makes smoke, and keep children out of the kitchen.

Raw beef hygiene: keep raw meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge in a covered dish so it can't drip onto other food, use a separate board and knife for raw meat (or wash them in hot soapy water before they touch anything else), and wash your hands for 20 seconds after handling it. Don't rinse raw beef under the tap: it spreads germs around the sink and does nothing to remove them. Cook or freeze it by the use-by date.

Resting: after cooking, leave the beef on a warm plate or board, loosely covered with foil, for about 5 minutes for a steak and 20 to 30 minutes for a joint. The juices settle, so they stay in the meat instead of running onto the board, and the centre rises a few degrees as it rests.

Keeping food hot and cold: when cooking for guests, keep hot food above about 63°C until it is served (in a warm oven or covered), and keep cold food in the fridge until the last moment. Don't leave food at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

LEVEL 2 · SUNDAY

A Sunday roast with the trimmings

A morning's work, 3 to 4 hours in all | 6 portions | timing a roast, potatoes, Yorkshires and gravy

The biggest timing job in home cooking: a joint, roast potatoes, Yorkshires, gravy and vegetables all ready together. The secret is that the beef rests for 30 minutes, which is when everything else gets finished.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

1 batch	rib or sirloin joint, for 6 (Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 4)
1 batch	Yorkshire puddings (Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 4)
1 batch	gravy from the tin (Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 4)
1.2 kg	potatoes, for roasting (Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1, chapter 3)
600 g	carrots and green vegetables
1 jar	horseradish or mustard to serve

1. Write a timeline from the time you want to eat, working back, using the diagram above. Prepare the vegetables and lay the table first, and get the potatoes parboiled and roughed up for roasting.
2. Roast the beef (chapter 4), put the potatoes in the oven an hour before serving, and make the batter. Rest the beef for 30 minutes and use that time to cook the Yorkshires in the hottest oven, make the gravy and cook the vegetables.
3. Warm the plates and the gravy jug, carve the beef at the table or on a board, and serve everything straight away.

TIMING, HOT TINS AND SERVING

Plan on paper: write the timings down, starting from when you want to eat, and work backwards. Tick each job off. Do everything you can the day before.

Hot fat in the tin: the roasting tin and the fat in it are extremely hot. Pull the shelf out to lift the tin, rest it on a heatproof surface, use dry oven gloves (a damp glove conducts heat) and keep children and pets out of the kitchen.

Keeping food hot and cold: when cooking for guests, keep hot food above about 63°C until it is served (in a warm oven or covered), and keep cold food in the fridge until the last moment.

> Don't leave food at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
>
> **Carving:** carve on a board with a groove or a tray for the juices, steady the joint with a carving fork, and use a long, sharp knife. Cut across the grain in slices about 5 mm thick, using long, smooth strokes rather than sawing, and keep your free hand behind the fork.

LEVEL 2 · AHEAD

A make-ahead casserole supper

30 minutes on the day, plus the casserole made the day before | 6 portions

cooking ahead so the day is calm

Stews improve overnight, so make the casserole the day before, cool it quickly, and all you need to do on the day is reheat it and make the mash and a green vegetable. It is the easiest way to cook for guests.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

1 batch	beef casserole, made the day before (Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 5)
1 kg	potatoes, for mash (Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1, chapter 2)
50 g	butter
100 ml	milk, warmed
400 g	green beans or cabbage

1. Make the casserole the day before, cool it within 1 to 2 hours, and keep it covered in the fridge.
2. On the day, reheat the casserole slowly on the hob or in the oven until it is **steaming hot all the way through**, and stir it now and then.
3. Boil and mash the potatoes with the butter and warm milk, cook the greens, and serve everything together in warm bowls.

COOLING, REHEATING AND SERVING

Cooling a big pot: a large pot of stew stays warm for hours, which is when germs multiply. If you aren't eating it straight away, divide it into shallow containers, cool it within 1 to 2 hours, then cover and chill. Keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days or freeze it for up to about 3 months (general guidance), and reheat it until it is steaming hot all the way through.

Leftovers: cool cooked beef quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover it and keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days (general guidance). Reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, and reheat it only once. Don't leave cooked beef standing at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

> **Keeping food hot and cold:** when cooking for guests, keep hot food above about 63°C until it is served (in a warm oven or covered), and keep cold food in the fridge until the last moment. Don't leave food at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

LEVEL 3 · HOUSE DINNER

Your own beef dinner

Planning 30 minutes; cooking depends on the dish | 4 portions | making a dish your own

Choose the recipe you liked best, change one thing and cook it again. Write down what changed. A notebook of small changes turns into your own set of house recipes.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1	notebook for your beef notes
1 batch	a recipe from this course that you like best
1	one change to try

1. Pick the dish you would most like to cook for guests and write down the recipe, including the cut, weight and timings.
2. Change **one** thing at a time: the cut, a different sauce, a new seasoning or a different vegetable.
3. Cook it, taste it with someone and write down what you would change. Give the dish a name and make a timeline for serving it.

> **ALLERGENS AND GUESTS**
>
> **Allergen cards:** ask guests about allergies and diets before you plan. Note what is in each dish (wheat in the Yorkshires and gravy, milk and mustard in the sauces, celery in the stock), and keep a plain, safe option for anyone who needs one.
>
> **Allergens:** beef itself is not a common allergen, but stock cubes and gravy granules often contain celery, gluten or soy, and sauces may contain milk (butter, cream) and mustard. Check every label, and swap in plant butter or gluten-free flour where needed.
>
> **Keeping food hot and cold:** when cooking for guests, keep hot food above about 63°C until it is served (in a warm oven or covered), and keep cold food in the fridge until the last moment. Don't leave food at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

A timed dinner

Plan against the clock.

1. Write the timeline for one dinner, follow it and note where you ran early or late.

Look for: Most jobs take longer than you think, and the last 15 minutes are the busiest. Add a margin and do the make-ahead jobs first.

EXPERIMENT

Swap one dish

Same dinner, one change.

1. Replace one dish with another, such as mash with roast potatoes or a pepper sauce with garlic butter, and see how the dinner changes.

Look for: One change can lighten or enrich the whole meal. Write down which combinations work best together.

EXPERIMENT

Your own signature dish

One change at a time.

1. Change just one thing in your favourite beef dish and cook it again.

Look for: Changing one thing at a time shows you what each change does. Write it in your notebook and name the result.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Steak night				
Sunday roast				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Casserole supper				
Your own beef dinner				
A timed dinner				
Swap one dish				
Your own signature dish				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Everything is ready at different times	No timeline	Write the timings backwards from serving
Food goes cold on the plate	Cold plates or slow serving	Warm the plates and carve and plate quickly
Gravy is lumpy at the last minute	Rushed	Make it while the beef rests, and strain it
Kitchen is chaotic	Too much left to the last minute	Make a stew or a sauce ahead and prepare the vegetables earlier
A guest has an allergy	No information	Ask beforehand and label the dishes
Not enough fridge space	Too much made ahead	Plan the fridge, and chill the casserole in shallow dishes

HOT FOOD, LEFTOVERS AND ALLERGENS

Keeping food hot and cold: when cooking for guests, keep hot food above about 63°C until it is served (in a warm oven or covered), and keep cold food in the fridge until the last moment. Don't leave food at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Leftovers: cool cooked beef quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover it and keep it in the fridge for up to about 2 days (general guidance). Reheat until it is steaming hot all the way through, and reheat

it only once. Don't leave cooked beef standing at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

Allergen cards: ask guests about allergies and diets before you plan. Note what is in each dish (wheat in the Yorkshires and gravy, milk and mustard in the sauces, celery in the stock), and keep a plain, safe option for anyone who needs one.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can write a timeline from serving time backwards.
- ☐ I can cook a steak dinner for two with everything hot together.
- ☐ I can time a roast with its trimmings.
- ☐ I can make a casserole ahead and reheat it safely.
- ☐ I have written down my own beef dinner.

NEXT CHAPTER

This is the last chapter of Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1. Next in the series, consider Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2 (planned): burgers, meatballs, slow cooking, world beef dishes and basic butchery.