

COOKING SKILLS

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2

8 Chapters

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Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2

Chapter 1 · Burgers

SKILL GOAL

Shape and cook burgers that are juicy and cooked through, and build them well.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A burger is **shaped mince**, and that changes the rules from a steak. The meat is cut up and mixed, so any germs on the surface are spread all through it. A burger therefore has to be cooked right through, and it must not be served rare. In return it is cheap, quick, and forgiving, as long as you handle it lightly, keep the mince cold and choose enough fat. Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 6 covers cooking mince in sauces.

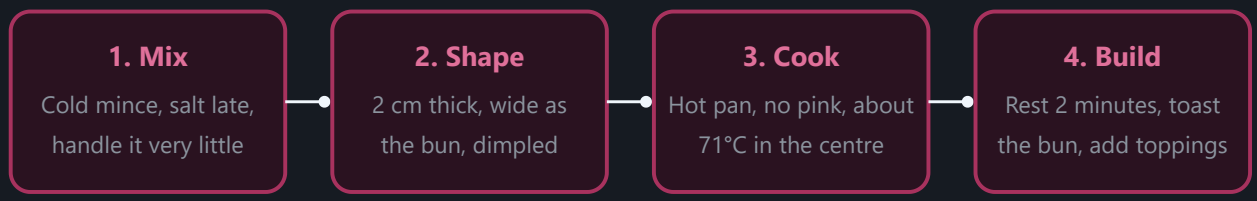


Figure 1. A good burger is handled as little as possible, cooked right through and rested before it is eaten.

The method

- **Choose 15 to 20% fat.** Lean mince makes dry burgers.
- **Keep it cold and handle it lightly.** Warm, squeezed mince goes tough and rubbery.
- **Salt the outside just before cooking,** not the mixture, which turns it into a sausage texture.
- **Cook through:** no pink, juices clear, about 71°C in the centre.
- **Rest 2 minutes,** then build with a toasted bun.

FAT IN THE MINCE	RESULT	BEST FOR
5 to 10%	Dry and firm	Sauces, pies, stuffing: not burgers
15%	Juicy, a little less rich	Everyday burgers
20%	Very juicy, shrinks more	Burgers and smash burgers
25% or more	Greasy, shrinks a lot	Better in a sauce, with fat drained

COOKED-THROUGH BURGERS, HOT PANS AND ALLERGENS

Burgers must be cooked through: unlike a whole steak, a burger has the outside of the meat mixed all the way through it, so any germs are in the middle too. Cook burgers until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Don't serve burgers rare, especially to children, older people, anyone pregnant or anyone with a weakened immune system.

Spitting fat: mince releases fat and juices that spit in a hot pan. Use a pan big enough to give you space, a splatter guard if you have one, a long spatula, and keep your face and arms back.

Allergens: buns contain wheat (gluten) and sometimes sesame and milk. Cheese is milk, mayonnaise is egg, mustard is a listed allergen, and some pickles and sauces contain celery or sulphites. Check the labels, and offer a lettuce wrap or a gluten-free bun if needed.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A simple pan-fried burger

15 minutes plus 15 minutes chilling | 4 portions | shaping and cooking a burger through

Only mince, salt and pepper. The fat does the work: a burger with 15 to 20% fat stays juicy, while a lean one dries out. The less you handle the mince, the more tender the burger.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	beef mince (15 to 20% fat), straight from the fridge
¾ tsp	flaked sea salt
1 pinch	black pepper
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
4	burger buns
1	tomato, sliced
4	lettuce leaves
1	small red onion, sliced

1. Divide the mince into 4 portions and shape each lightly into a patty about 2 cm thick and a little wider than the bun (it shrinks as it cooks). Press a shallow dimple into the middle of each with your thumb. Chill for **15 minutes**.
2. Season the outsides of the patties with the salt and pepper just before cooking. Heat a heavy pan over a medium-high heat with the oil and cook for **4 to 5 minutes a side**, turning once only, until there is no pink and the centre reaches about 71°C.
3. Rest for 2 minutes. Toast the buns cut side down in the pan, then build the burgers with lettuce, tomato and onion.

COOKING BURGERS THROUGH, HOT PAN AND ALLERGENS

Burgers must be cooked through: unlike a whole steak, a burger has the outside of the meat mixed all the way through it, so any germs are in the middle too. Cook burgers until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Don't serve burgers rare, especially to children, older people, anyone pregnant or anyone with a weakened immune system.

Spitting fat: mince releases fat and juices that spit in a hot pan. Use a pan big enough to give

you space, a splatter guard if you have one, a long spatula, and keep your face and arms back.

Allergens: buns contain wheat (gluten) and sometimes sesame and milk. Cheese is milk, mayonnaise is egg, mustard is a listed allergen, and some pickles and sauces contain celery or sulphites. Check the labels, and offer a lettuce wrap or a gluten-free bun if needed.

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.

LEVEL 2 · SMASH

Smash burgers

20 minutes | 4 portions (2 thin patties each) | pressing mince thin on a very hot pan for a crisp crust

A smash burger is a ball of mince pressed flat on a very hot pan, so the edges go lacy and crisp. The patties are thin, so they cook through in minutes. It needs very high heat and 20% fat mince.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

400 g	beef mince (20% fat)
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 pinch	flaked sea salt and black pepper
4	soft burger buns
4	slices of burger cheese
4 slices	pickles, sliced
4	baking parchment squares

1. Roll the mince into 8 loose balls of about 50 g. Heat a heavy pan (cast iron is ideal) until it is very hot and oil it lightly. Open a window.
2. Put 2 balls on the pan, cover each with a square of parchment and press down hard and flat with a stiff spatula. Remove the parchment, season and cook for **2 minutes** until the edges are dark and crisp.
3. Scrape under each patty, flip, lay on the cheese and cook for **1 minute** more, until no pink remains. Stack two patties on a toasted bun with pickles.

VERY HOT PAN, THIN PATTIES AND ALLERGENS

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.

Spitting fat: mince releases fat and juices that spit in a hot pan. Use a pan big enough to give you space, a splatter guard if you have one, a long spatula, and keep your face and arms back.

Burgers must be cooked through: unlike a whole steak, a burger has the outside of the meat mixed all the way through it, so any germs are in the middle too. Cook burgers until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Don't serve burgers rare, especially to children, older people, anyone pregnant or anyone with a weakened immune system.

Hot cheese: melted cheese is as hot as the burger under it and sticks to skin and the roof of your mouth. Let burgers stand for a couple of minutes before biting in.

LEVEL 2 · BUILD IT

A burger with sauce and quick onion relish

25 minutes plus the burgers | 4 portions | building a burger from sharp, creamy and sweet parts

A great burger is a balance: rich meat, creamy sauce, sharp pickle, sweet onion and a soft bun. The quick pickled onions take 10 minutes and the sauce takes 2. For the buns, see Cooking Skills: Bread 1, chapter 6.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1 batch	simple pan-fried burgers (above)
3 tbsp	mayonnaise
1 tbsp	tomato ketchup
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
1 tbsp	chopped gherkin
1	red onion, thinly sliced
2 tbsp	cider vinegar
1 tsp	sugar

1. Stir the sliced onion with the vinegar, sugar and a pinch of salt in a small bowl and leave for **10 minutes**, stirring once, until soft and pink.
2. Mix the mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard and gherkin for the sauce.
3. Cook the burgers as above. Spread the sauce on both halves of the toasted buns, add the burger and a spoonful of the drained onions.

RAW ONION, SAUCE AND ALLERGENS

Burgers must be cooked through: unlike a whole steak, a burger has the outside of the meat mixed all the way through it, so any germs are in the middle too. Cook burgers until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Don't serve burgers rare, especially to children, older people, anyone pregnant or anyone with a weakened immune system.

Allergens: buns contain wheat (gluten) and sometimes sesame and milk. Cheese is milk, mayonnaise is egg, mustard is a listed allergen, and some pickles and sauces contain celery or sulphites. Check the labels, and offer a lettuce wrap or a gluten-free bun if needed.

> **Mayonnaise:** use shop-bought mayonnaise, which is made with pasteurised egg, and keep opened jars in the fridge.

LEVEL 3 · CROWD

A tray of oven-baked sliders

30 minutes | 12 sliders (4 to 6 portions) | cooking a batch of small burgers all at once

Frying 12 burgers is a chore, but a tray of sliders bakes together and is perfect for a party. Keep them equal in size so that they cook at the same time.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

600 g	beef mince (15 to 20% fat)
1 pinch	flaked sea salt and black pepper
12	slider rolls or small soft buns
6	slices of cheese, halved
12 slices	pickles, sliced
2 tbsp	burger sauce (above)

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan). Divide the mince into 12 equal portions (about 50 g), shape each into a patty slightly wider than the roll, season and lay on a lined tray.
2. Bake for **12 to 14 minutes**, adding the cheese for the last 2 minutes, until there is no pink and the centres are about 71°C.
3. Warm the rolls for 2 minutes in the oven. Spread with sauce, add a slider and a pickle and serve straight away.

HOT OVEN, COOKING THROUGH AND ALLERGENS

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.

Burgers must be cooked through: unlike a whole steak, a burger has the outside of the meat mixed all the way through it, so any germs are in the middle too. Cook burgers until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Don't serve burgers rare, especially to children, older people, anyone pregnant or anyone with a weakened immune system.

Allergens: buns contain wheat (gluten) and sometimes sesame and milk. Cheese is milk,

> mayonnaise is egg, mustard is a listed allergen, and some pickles and sauces contain celery or sulphites. Check the labels, and offer a lettuce wrap or a gluten-free bun if needed.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Fat percentage

10% and 20%.

1. Make two burgers the same size, one from 10% fat mince and one from 20%, and cook them the same way.

Look for: The 20% burger is juicier, richer and shrinks more. The 10% burger is firmer and drier. Taste and note the difference.

EXPERIMENT

Salt in the mix

Inside and outside.

1. Mix salt into one batch of mince and work it for a minute, and just season the outside of the other.

Look for: The salted-through burger is dense and bouncy, like a sausage. The one salted outside is looser and more tender.

EXPERIMENT

Thick and thin

1 cm and 3 cm.

1. Cook a thin patty (1 cm) and a thick one (3 cm) in the same pan.

Look for: The thin one has more crust and cooks in minutes. The thick one is juicier but needs longer and a thermometer to check it is cooked through.

EXPERIMENT

Pan or oven

Two methods.

1. Cook one burger in a pan and one in a 200°C oven for about 12 minutes.

Look for: The pan gives a darker crust; the oven is hands-off and even, but paler. Choose by how many you are cooking.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Pan-fried burger				
Smash burger				
Burger with sauce and relish				
Oven-baked sliders				
Fat percentage				
Salt in the mix				
Thick and thin				
Pan or oven				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Dry, tough burger	Lean mince, over-mixed or overcooked	Use 15 to 20% fat, handle lightly and use a thermometer
Burger shrinks into a ball	High fat or warm mince	Make wider patties, dimple the centre and chill first

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Burger falls apart	Too loose or too wet	Pack firmly but lightly and chill for 15 minutes
Pink in the middle	Too thick, or the pan too hot	Cook longer at a lower heat until it reaches 71°C
Soggy bun	Wet toppings or untoasted bun	Toast the bun and put sauce on the bun, not directly on it
Greasy burger	Very fatty mince	Rest on kitchen paper and use less fat next time

COOKED-THROUGH BURGERS, HOT PANS AND LEFTOVERS

Burgers must be cooked through: unlike a whole steak, a burger has the outside of the meat mixed all the way through it, so any germs are in the middle too. Cook burgers until there is no pink, the juices run clear and the centre reaches about 71°C. Don't serve burgers rare, especially to children, older people, anyone pregnant or anyone with a weakened immune system.

Spitting fat: mince releases fat and juices that spit in a hot pan. Use a pan big enough to give you space, a splatter guard if you have one, a long spatula, and keep your face and arms back.

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 shape a burger lightly and keep the mince cold.
- ☐ I know why burgers must be cooked through.
- ☐ I can cook a burger to about 71°C.
- ☐ I can make a smash burger.
- ☐ I can build a burger with a sauce and pickled onions.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 2 is Meatballs, Meatloaf and Koftas: shaping and binding mince in other ways.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2

Chapter 2 · Meatballs, Meatloaf and Koftas

SKILL GOAL

Bind, shape and cook mince as meatballs, koftas and a meatloaf, safely.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Meatballs, koftas and meatloaf are all **mince bound together and shaped**. A binder (breadcrumbs, egg or milk) holds the mixture and keeps it soft, seasoning gives it flavour, and shaping decides the cooking time: small balls take 15 to 20 minutes, a loaf nearly an hour. Because the mince is mixed, they must all be cooked right through. Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 6 covers mince in sauces and pies.

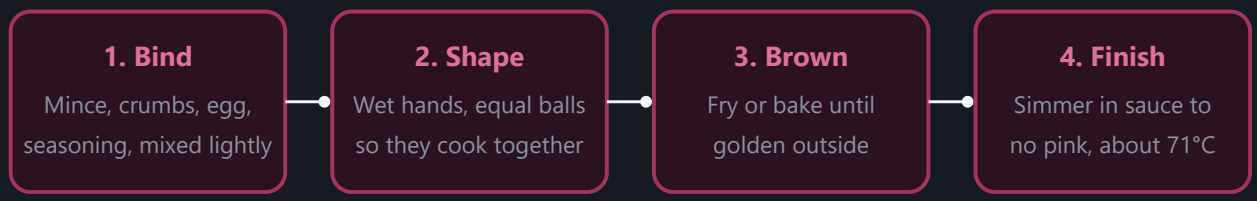


Figure 2. Meatballs of equal size cook at the same speed; breadcrumbs and egg bind them and keep them soft.

The method

- **Mix lightly,** until just combined. Overworked mince goes tough.
- **Use a binder:** breadcrumbs soaked in milk keep the meat tender.
- **Shape equal pieces** so they cook at the same speed. Wet hands stop sticking.
- **Brown, then finish:** baking, frying or simmering in sauce.
- **Check the middle:** no pink, about 71°C.

DISH	SHAPE	COOK	TIME (APPROXIMATE)
Oven-baked meatballs	Walnut-sized balls	200°C oven	18 to 20 minutes
Meatballs in sauce	Walnut-sized balls	Brown, then simmer	5 + 20 minutes
Koftas	Long sausages on skewers	Grill or griddle	10 to 12 minutes
Meatloaf	Loaf in a tin	180°C oven	About 1 hour

MINCE, THERMOMETERS AND HOT OVENS

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.

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.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Oven-baked meatballs

15 minutes plus 18 minutes baking | 4 portions (about 20 balls) | mixing, shaping and baking meatballs

The simplest meatballs: mix, roll and bake. No frying means no splatter, and the tray does the work. Use them in wraps, with pasta, or with rice and salad.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	beef mince (10 to 15% fat)
50 g	fresh white breadcrumbs
1	Lion-marked egg
1	small onion, finely grated
1 tsp	smoked paprika
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
1 pinch	black pepper

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan) and line a tray. Mix all the ingredients in a bowl with your hands, **just until combined**.
2. With wet hands, roll into about 20 balls of equal size (about the size of a walnut) and lay them on the tray.
3. Bake for **18 to 20 minutes**, turning once, until they are browned and there is no pink inside (about 71°C in the centre).

MINCE, EGGS AND A 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.

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.

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.

LEVEL 2 · SAUCE

Meatballs in tomato sauce

25 minutes plus 20 minutes simmering | 4 portions | browning meatballs and finishing them in a sauce

Brown the balls first for flavour, then finish them in a tomato sauce, where they cook through and keep soft. Serve over pasta, in a roll or with mash.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1 batch	meatball mixture (above), shaped into balls
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	onion, finely chopped
2	garlic cloves, crushed
400 g	tin of chopped tomatoes
1 tbsp	tomato purée
1 tsp	dried oregano
1 tbsp	chopped fresh parsley

1. Heat the oil in a wide pan over a medium-high heat and brown the meatballs in batches for about **5 minutes**, turning, then set them aside.
2. In the same pan, cook the onion for 5 minutes, add the garlic for 1 minute, then the tomatoes, purée and oregano and bring to a simmer.
3. Return the meatballs, cover and simmer gently for **20 minutes**, until there is no pink inside and the sauce is thick. Scatter with parsley.

MINCE, HOT SAUCE AND SPLATTER

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.

> **Spitting fat:** mince releases fat and juices that spit in a hot pan. Use a pan big enough to give you space, a splatter guard if you have one, a long spatula, and keep your face and arms back.

LEVEL 2 · SKEWERS

Beef koftas

20 minutes plus 20 minutes chilling and 12 minutes cooking | 4 portions (8 koftas) | shaping spiced mince onto skewers

Spiced mince pressed around a skewer in a long, thin shape that cooks quickly under a grill or in a pan. Squeezing the onion dry stops the mixture going sloppy, and chilling it helps it stay on the stick.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	beef mince (15% fat)
1	small onion, finely grated and squeezed dry
2	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tsp	ground cumin
1 tsp	ground coriander
1 tsp	smoked paprika
2 tbsp	chopped parsley or coriander
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
150 g	plain yogurt, to serve

1. Mix everything except the yogurt with your hands, then chill the mixture for **20 minutes**. Soak 8 wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes.
2. With wet hands, divide the mixture into 8 and press each around a skewer in a long sausage shape.
3. Cook under a hot grill or in a griddle pan for **10 to 12 minutes**, turning, until browned and there is no pink inside. Serve with the yogurt, warm flatbreads and salad.

> **MINCE, SKEWERS AND HOT GRILL**
>
> **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.
>
> **Skewers:** soak wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes so they don't burn, or use metal ones,

which get very hot. Hold the ends with a cloth or tongs, and keep sharp points away from small children.

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.

LEVEL 3 · LOAF

A glazed meatloaf

20 minutes plus 1 hour baking and 10 minutes resting | 6 portions

baking a large piece of shaped mince so it stays moist and cooked through

A meatloaf is a giant meatball baked in a tin. The breadcrumbs soaked in milk keep it tender, and the glaze gives it a shiny, tangy crust. A thermometer is the only way to be sure the middle is cooked.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

700 g	beef mince (10 to 15% fat)
1	onion, finely chopped
50 g	fresh breadcrumbs
1	Lion-marked egg
100 ml	milk
1 tbsp	tomato purée
1 tsp	wholegrain mustard
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
3 tbsp	ketchup, for the glaze
1 tsp	cider vinegar, for the glaze
1 tsp	brown sugar, for the glaze

1. Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan) and line a 900 g loaf tin. Soak the breadcrumbs in the milk for 5 minutes, then mix with all the other loaf ingredients, **lightly**, and pack into the tin.
2. Mix the glaze ingredients and spread half over the top. Bake for **50 minutes**, then add the rest of the glaze and bake for 10 more minutes, until the centre reaches about 71°C.
3. Rest in the tin for 10 minutes, pour off the fat, lift out and slice thickly with a sharp knife.

> **MINCE, THERMOMETER, HOT TIN AND EGGS**

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.

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.

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

Breadcrumbs or none

With and without.

1. Make a small batch of meatballs with breadcrumbs and egg, and another with just mince and salt, and cook them the same way.

Look for: The ones with crumbs are softer and lighter; the plain ones are firm and dense. A binder keeps them tender.

EXPERIMENT

Baked or fried

Two ways.

1. Bake half a batch and fry the other half, then taste them side by side.

Look for: The fried balls have a darker crust and more flavour but need turning and splatter; the baked ones are hands-off and a little paler.

EXPERIMENT

Size of the ball

Small and large.

1. Roll one batch into small balls (about 20 g) and another into large ones (about 50 g) and cook them for the same time.

Look for: The small balls are done sooner and can dry out; the big ones are juicier but need longer. Always check the middle.

EXPERIMENT

Resting the meatloaf

At once and after 10 minutes.

1. Cut one slice from the hot meatloaf straight away and another after resting for 10 minutes.

Look for: The unrested slice crumbles and leaks fat; the rested one holds together. Resting lets the loaf set.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Oven-baked meatballs				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Meatballs in tomato sauce				
Beef koftas				
Glazed meatloaf				
Breadcrumbs or none				
Baked or fried				
Size of the ball				
Resting the meatloaf				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Tough, rubbery meatballs	Over-mixed or too much salt	Mix lightly, until just combined
Meatballs fall apart	Too wet, or not enough binder	Add breadcrumbs and chill before shaping
Koftas fall off the skewers	Mixture too wet or warm	Squeeze the onion dry and chill the mixture
Dry meatloaf	Lean mince or overbaked	Use 10 to 15% fat, soak the crumbs and check the temperature
Greasy meatloaf	Very fatty mince	Bake on a rack or pour off the fat before slicing
Pink in the middle	Too large or underbaked	Cook until no pink and the centre reaches about 71°C

MINCE, COOLING AND LEFTOVERS

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.

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 mix mince lightly with a binder.
- ☐ I can shape meatballs of an equal size.
- ☐ I can cook meatballs and koftas through safely.
- ☐ I can bake a meatloaf and rest it before slicing.
- ☐ I can tell when mince shapes are done.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 3 is Slow Cooker and Pot Roasts: long, gentle cooking.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2

Chapter 3 · Slow Cooker and Pot Roasts

SKILL GOAL

Cook tough cuts of beef slowly until they are tender, in a slow cooker and in the oven.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Slow cooking is the same idea as braising (Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 5), taken further: **a low, steady heat for many hours** turns the toughest and cheapest cuts into meat that falls apart. A slow cooker does it with almost no attention, and a covered pot in a low oven gives a similar result with more browning. The cuts that suit it are chuck, brisket, shin and short rib; the tender steak cuts would dry out.

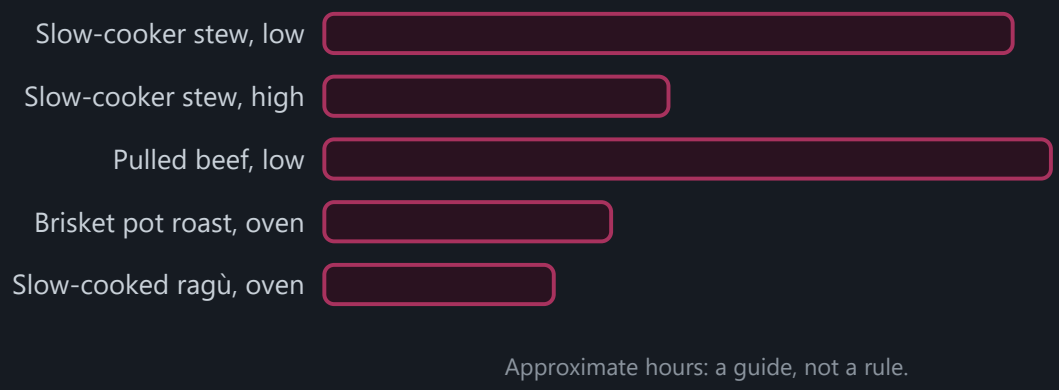


Figure 3. Slow cooking trades hours for effort: the cheaper the cut, the longer it takes and the better it gets.

The method

- **Brown first,** if you can. It adds flavour the slow cooker can't make.
- **Use less liquid** than on the hob. The lid traps moisture.
- **Keep the lid on.** Each lift adds 20 to 30 minutes.
- **Cook until tender,** not to a fixed time. Low is gentler than high.

- **Skim the fat, thicken the sauce** and season at the end.

DISH	CUT	METHOD	TIME (APPROXIMATE)
Slow-cooker stew	Chuck	Low	8 to 9 hours
Pulled beef	Brisket or chuck	Low	9 to 10 hours
Pot-roast brisket	Brisket	Oven, 150°C, covered	3½ to 4 hours
Beef ragù	Chuck or shin	Oven, 150°C, covered	About 3 hours

SLOW COOKERS, HOT POTS AND LEFTOVERS

Slow cooker safety: follow your cooker's manual, because models differ. Brown the beef first for flavour, fill the pot between about half and three quarters full, keep the lid on (every peek adds 20 to 30 minutes), never put frozen meat in, and don't use it to reheat leftovers. Beef must be cooked until tender and steaming hot all the way through.

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.

Slow-cooked leftovers: take leftovers out of the cooker and divide them into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months), and reheat in a pan or the oven until steaming hot, not in the slow cooker.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A slow-cooker beef stew

20 minutes plus 8 to 9 hours on low | 4 portions | browning first, then letting the slow cooker do the rest

A slow cooker keeps food at a low, steady heat for hours. Browning the beef first takes 10 minutes and makes a far better stew than putting it in raw. Use less liquid than on the hob, because none escapes.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

800 g	chuck or braising steak, in 4 cm cubes
2 tbsp	plain flour, seasoned
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	onion, chopped
2	carrots, in thick slices
2	celery sticks, sliced
1 tbsp	tomato purée
400 ml	beef stock (low-salt), hot
2	bay leaves

1. Toss the beef in the seasoned flour. Brown it in the oil in a hot pan, in batches, and tip it into the slow cooker. Soften the onion in the same pan for 3 minutes and add it.
2. Add the carrots, celery, tomato purée, hot stock and bay leaves and stir. Put the lid on and cook on **low for 8 to 9 hours** (or high for 4 to 5 hours), until the beef is fork-tender.
3. Skim off any fat, remove the bay leaves, season and serve.

> **SLOW COOKER SAFETY, TENDER BEEF AND SALT**
>
> **Slow cooker safety:** follow your cooker's manual, because models differ. Brown the beef first for flavour, fill the pot between about half and three quarters full, keep the lid on (every peek adds 20 to 30 minutes), never put frozen meat in, and don't use it to reheat leftovers. Beef must be cooked until tender and steaming hot all the way through.
>
> **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 1 · PULLED

Pulled beef

20 minutes plus 9 to 10 hours on low | 6 portions | cooking a joint until it shreds

Brisket or chuck cooked until it falls apart can be pulled into strands with two forks and piled into rolls, tacos or rice. The spice rub and a splash of vinegar give it a smoky, tangy flavour.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

1.2 kg	beef brisket or chuck joint, in 2 or 3 big pieces
1 tbsp	smoked paprika
1 tsp	ground cumin
1 tsp	garlic powder
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	onion, sliced
150 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
1 tbsp	cider vinegar

1. Mix the paprika, cumin, garlic powder and salt and rub it all over the beef. Brown the beef on all sides in the oil in a hot pan and put it in the slow cooker on top of the onion.
2. Pour in the stock and vinegar, put on the lid and cook on **low for 9 to 10 hours** (or high for 5 to 6), until the beef pulls apart easily with a fork.
3. Lift the beef onto a tray, shred it with two forks, discarding any hard fat, and stir it back into the juices. Serve in rolls or tortillas.

> **SLOW COOKER SAFETY, HOT JUICES AND LEFTOVERS**
>
> **Slow cooker safety:** follow your cooker's manual, because models differ. Brown the beef first for flavour, fill the pot between about half and three quarters full, keep the lid on (every peek adds 20 to 30 minutes), never put frozen meat in, and don't use it to reheat leftovers. Beef must be cooked until tender and steaming hot all the way through.

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.

Slow-cooked leftovers: take leftovers out of the cooker and divide them into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months), and reheat in a pan or the oven until steaming hot, not in the slow cooker.

LEVEL 2 · OVEN

A pot-roast brisket

30 minutes plus 3½ to 4 hours cooking and 20 minutes resting | 6 to 8 portions

slow-roasting a large joint in a covered pot

A pot roast is a braised joint kept whole, then sliced. The pot is covered so the beef cooks in its own steam and the stock, and the juices become the gravy. It is sliced across the grain after resting.

INGREDIENTS (7 PORTIONS)

1.5 kg	beef brisket joint
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
2	onions, thickly sliced
3	carrots, in chunks
300 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
1 tbsp	tomato purée
2	bay leaves
1 tbsp	plain flour (for the gravy)

1. Heat the oven to 150°C (130°C fan). Brown the brisket on all sides in the oil in a large ovenproof pot, then set it aside. Soften the onions in the pot, add the purée, stock and bay leaves and put the beef back on top with the carrots round it.
2. Cover tightly and cook for **3½ to 4 hours**, turning once, until the beef is tender when pierced with a skewer. Rest it on a board, covered, for 20 minutes.
3. Skim the fat from the juices, whisk in the flour mixed with water and simmer for 5 minutes. Slice the beef across the grain and serve with the gravy and vegetables.

> **HOT POT, HEAVY JOINT AND CARVING**
>
> **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.

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.

Slow-cooked leftovers: take leftovers out of the cooker and divide them into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months), and reheat in a pan or the oven until steaming hot, not in the slow cooker.

LEVEL 3 · RAGÙ

A slow-cooked beef ragù

30 minutes plus 3 hours cooking | 6 portions | making a rich sauce from a tough cut

Instead of mince, a ragù made from chunks of chuck or shin cooked for 3 hours becomes shreds in a deep tomato sauce. It is the same idea as a bolognese, but slower and richer.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

700 g	chuck or shin, in 3 cm pieces
2 tbsp	olive oil
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
300 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
2	bay leaves
400 g	pappardelle or other wide pasta

1. Heat the oven to 150°C (130°C fan). Brown the beef in batches in the oil in an ovenproof pot, then set it aside. Cook the onion, carrot and celery for 8 minutes, add the garlic and purée for 1 minute.
2. Add the tomatoes, stock and bay leaves, return the beef, cover and cook for **3 hours**, stirring once, until the beef falls apart.
3. Shred the beef in the sauce with two forks, simmer uncovered for 10 minutes if it is thin, and toss with the cooked pasta.

> **HOT POT, TENDER BEEF 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.

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.

Slow-cooked leftovers: take leftovers out of the cooker and divide them into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months), and reheat in a pan or the oven until steaming hot, not in the slow cooker.

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

Low or high

Same stew, two settings.

1. Cook two small stews, one on low for 8 hours and one on high for 4.

Look for: Low gives meat that is tender and holds its shape; high is quicker, but the beef can be stringier. If you have time, choose low.

EXPERIMENT

Lid on or lifted

Peeking.

1. Cook two stews and lift the lid of one every hour, checking when each is tender.

Look for: The peeked-at stew takes longer to become tender, because each lift lets heat escape. Resist the urge.

EXPERIMENT

Resting in the juices

Slice at once or after resting.

1. Take a pot roast out and slice it at once, and slice another after 20 minutes' rest in its covered pot.

Look for: The rested joint is juicier and slices more cleanly. Slow-cooked meat reabsorbs its juices as it rests.

EXPERIMENT

Shredded or sliced

Two ways to serve.

1. Serve one portion of brisket in thick slices and one shredded in the sauce.

Look for: Slices keep a meaty bite; shreds soak up more sauce and feel softer. Slice across the grain if you slice.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Slow-cooker beef stew				
Pulled beef				
Pot-roast brisket				
Beef ragù				
Low or high				
Lid on or lifted				
Resting in the juices				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Shredded or sliced				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Beef still tough	Not cooked long enough	Keep cooking, with the lid on, and test with a fork
Watery sauce	Too much liquid or lid kept on	Cook the sauce uncovered on the hob until it thickens
Bland stew	Beef not browned or not seasoned	Brown the beef and season at the end, with a splash of vinegar
Stringy, dry beef	Lean cut or cooked too long on high	Use chuck or brisket and cook on low
Greasy sauce	Fatty cut	Skim with a spoon or chill and lift the fat off
Mushy vegetables	Cut too small or added too early	Cut chunky or add soft vegetables for the last hour

SLOW COOKERS, HOT POTS AND LEFTOVERS

Slow cooker safety: follow your cooker's manual, because models differ. Brown the beef first for flavour, fill the pot between about half and three quarters full, keep the lid on (every peek adds 20 to 30 minutes), never put frozen meat in, and don't use it to reheat leftovers. Beef must be cooked until tender and steaming hot all the way through.

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.

Slow-cooked leftovers: take leftovers out of the cooker and divide them into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months), and reheat in a pan or the oven until steaming hot, not in the slow cooker.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can brown beef and set up a slow cooker.

☐ I know to keep the lid on and cook until tender.

☐ I can pull or slice slow-cooked beef.

☐ I can pot-roast a joint in the oven.

☐ I cool and store slow-cooked leftovers safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 4 is Curries and Spiced Stews: layering spices into slow-cooked beef.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2

Chapter 4 · Curries and Spiced Stews

SKILL GOAL

Layer spices into slow-cooked beef without burning them.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Spices turn slow-cooked beef into a whole new range of dishes. The skill is in the **order**: whole spices first in hot oil, then the onion base, then ground spices for a minute, then the beef and liquid, and finally acid and fresh herbs to lift the dish at the end. Spices burn easily, so keep the heat moderate and add liquid at the first sign of sticking. For vegetable curries and stews, see Cooking Skills: Vegetables 2, chapter 2.

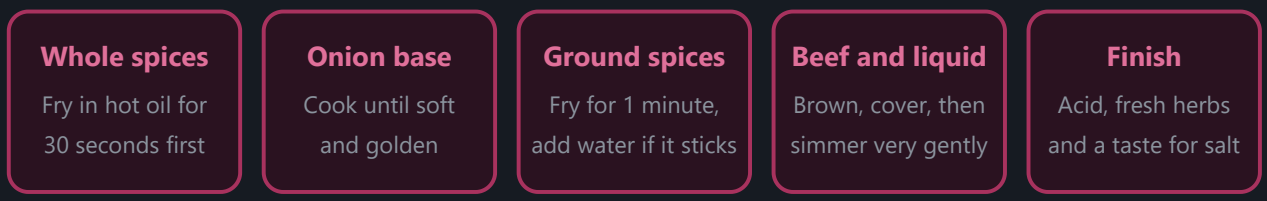


Figure 4. Spices are layered in order, each cooked just long enough to bring out its flavour and no longer.

The method

- **Fry whole spices briefly,** then cook the onions until golden: that is the flavour base.
- **Fry ground spices for about a minute** and no longer, adding water if they stick.
- **Brown the beef in batches,** then simmer very gently until tender.
- **Reduce at the end** if the sauce is thin, stirring so it doesn't catch.
- **Finish with acid and fresh herbs,** then taste for salt.

DISH	MAIN SPICE	HEAT	TIME (APPROXIMATE)
Mild beef curry	Curry powder	Mild	1½ to 2 hours
Goulash	Sweet paprika	None	2 to 2½ hours
Spice paste	Coriander, cumin, turmeric	Mild	30 minutes, then freeze
Rendang-style	Spice paste, lemongrass	Mild to medium	2½ to 3 hours

SPICES, HOT POTS AND ALLERGENS

Burning spices: ground spices burn in seconds in a hot pan and taste bitter. Lower the heat before adding them, stir constantly, and add a splash of water or stock as soon as they smell toasty.

Chilli and spices: chilli can sting skin and eyes, so wash your hands well after chopping it and don't touch your face. Add heat in small steps, and keep portions for children mild.

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.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A mild beef curry

25 minutes plus 1½ to 2 hours simmering | 4 portions | cooking spices and beef in a gentle sauce

A family curry that is spiced but not hot. The curry powder is fried briefly so it loses its raw taste, and the beef then simmers gently until tender. For the idea of flavour bases, see Cooking Skills: Vegetables 2, chapter 1.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

700 g	chuck or braising steak, in 3 cm cubes
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
2	onions, finely chopped
3	garlic cloves, crushed
1 tbsp	fresh ginger, grated
1 tbsp	mild curry powder
1 tbsp	tomato purée
400 g	tin of chopped tomatoes
300 ml	beef stock (low-salt) or water
2 tbsp	plain yogurt or coconut milk, to finish

1. Brown the beef in half the oil in a heavy pan, in batches, and set it aside. Cook the onions in the rest of the oil for 8 to 10 minutes until golden, adding the garlic and ginger for the last minute.
2. Stir in the curry powder and cook for **1 minute**, then the purée, tomatoes and stock. Return the beef, cover and simmer very gently for **1½ to 2 hours**, until the beef is tender.
3. Stir in the yogurt or coconut milk and taste. Serve with rice and flatbreads.

BURNING SPICES, HOT POT AND ALLERGENS

Burning spices: ground spices burn in seconds in a hot pan and taste bitter. Lower the heat before adding them, stir constantly, and add a splash of water or stock as soon as they smell toasty.

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.

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 · PAPRIKA

A Hungarian-style goulash

30 minutes plus 2 to 2½ hours simmering | 4 to 6 portions | building a stew on paprika and onions

A rich stew of beef, a lot of onions and sweet paprika. The paprika must go in off the heat and for only a few seconds, because it burns very easily and turns bitter. Serve with potatoes, noodles or bread.

INGREDIENTS (5 PORTIONS)

800 g	chuck, in 3 cm cubes
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
2	onions, chopped
2	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp	sweet paprika
1 tsp	caraway seeds (optional)
1	red pepper, diced
2 tbsp	tomato purée
400 g	tin of chopped tomatoes
400 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
4 tbsp	soured cream, to serve

1. Brown the beef in batches in half the oil and set it aside. Cook the onions in the rest of the oil for 10 minutes until soft and golden, adding the garlic and caraway seeds for the last minute.
2. Take the pan off the heat, stir in the paprika for 20 seconds, then straight away add the purée, tomatoes, stock and pepper, scraping the base. Return the beef.
3. Cover and simmer gently for **2 to 2½ hours**, until tender. Serve with a spoonful of soured cream.

> **BURNING PAPRIKA, HOT POT AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Burning spices:** ground spices burn in seconds in a hot pan and taste bitter. Lower the heat before adding them, stir constantly, and add a splash of water or stock as soon as they smell

toasty.

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.

Milk: soured cream is dairy. Use a dairy-free alternative if needed.

LEVEL 2 · MAKE AHEAD

A make-ahead spice paste

30 minutes | About 8 portions of paste | blending and frying a base to freeze

A cooked spice paste of onion, garlic, ginger and ground spices that you can keep in the freezer. A cube or two turns beef into a curry in minutes. Frying the paste properly (until it loses its raw smell and the oil separates) is the important step.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

3	onions, roughly chopped
6	garlic cloves
5 cm	fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
2 tbsp	ground coriander
2 tbsp	ground cumin
1 tbsp	ground turmeric
1 tsp	smoked paprika
4 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Blend the onions, garlic and ginger to a rough paste with a splash of water. Heat the oil in a wide pan over a medium heat, add the paste and fry for **10 to 12 minutes**, stirring, until golden and dry.
2. Add the coriander, cumin, turmeric, paprika and salt and fry for 2 minutes, adding a splash of water if it starts to stick. Let it cool.
3. Spoon into ice cube trays or small tubs, cover and freeze. Once frozen, tip into a bag and use one or two cubes per portion.

> **BURNING SPICES, HOT OIL AND KEEPING**
>
> **Burning spices:** ground spices burn in seconds in a hot pan and taste bitter. Lower the heat before adding them, stir constantly, and add a splash of water or stock as soon as they smell toasty.
>
> **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.

Keeping spice paste: cool it quickly, keep it in a covered jar in the fridge for up to about 3 days, or freeze it in small portions for up to about 3 months (general guidance). Don't leave a paste with garlic in oil at room temperature.

LEVEL 3 · DRY CURRY

A beef rendang-style curry

20 minutes plus 2½ to 3 hours cooking | 4 to 6 portions

cooking a curry down until the sauce clings to the beef

A rendang is cooked slowly in coconut milk until the liquid reduces, the sauce turns dark and thick, and the beef starts to fry in its own oil. This version uses your spice paste and is mild; add more chilli at the end, if you want more heat.

INGREDIENTS (5 PORTIONS)

800 g	chuck or shin, in 4 cm cubes
4	cubes of spice paste (above)
400 ml	tin of coconut milk
2	stalks of lemongrass, bruised
1 tsp	mild chilli flakes (to taste)
2 tbsp	lime juice
1 tbsp	brown sugar
200 ml	water
1 pinch	flaked sea salt

1. Put the beef, spice paste, coconut milk, lemongrass, chilli flakes and water in a wide heavy pan and bring to a simmer. Cook gently, uncovered, for **1½ to 2 hours**, stirring occasionally, until the beef is tender and the sauce has reduced by about half.
2. Turn up the heat slightly and cook, **stirring often**, for 30 to 40 minutes until the sauce is thick, dark and clinging to the meat and the oil starts to separate. Don't let it catch on the base.
3. Stir in the lime juice and sugar, taste and season. Remove the lemongrass and serve with rice.

> **CATCHING SAUCE, HOT POT AND COCONUT**
>
> **Chilli and spices:** chilli can sting skin and eyes, so wash your hands well after chopping it and don't touch your face. Add heat in small steps, and keep portions for children mild.

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.

Coconut milk: once a tin is opened, keep the rest covered in the fridge and use it within a few days. Coconut is not usually a problem for people with nut allergies, but ask anyone who has one before you serve it, and check the label.

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.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Frying the spices

Raw and fried.

1. Make two small curries, adding the curry powder to the liquid in one and frying it in the oil first in the other.

Look for: The fried spices give a rounder, deeper, less raw flavour. Frying is worth the extra minute.

EXPERIMENT

Whole or ground

Cumin seeds against ground cumin.

1. Fry whole cumin seeds for 30 seconds in one pan, and use the same amount of ground cumin in another.

Look for: Whole seeds give a nutty, aromatic note and a little crunch; ground cumin is smoother and blends in. Both are good.

EXPERIMENT

Simmering time

1½ and 2½ hours.

1. Take a spoonful of the curry at 1½ hours and again at 2½ hours and compare the meat and the sauce.

Look for: At 1½ hours the beef is just tender; by 2½ it falls apart and the sauce is richer. Tough cuts reward patience.

EXPERIMENT

Heat level

Mild and hot.

1. Split a batch of curry in two and add a pinch of chilli flakes to one, tasting both.

Look for: A little chilli lifts the flavour without making it hot; more takes over. Add it in small steps, as you cannot take it out.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Mild beef curry				
Goulash				
Spice paste				
Rendang-style curry				
Frying the spices				
Whole or ground				
Simmering time				
Heat level				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Bitter curry	Burnt spices or paprika	Lower the heat, add liquid sooner and start again if it is very burnt
Raw, chalky spice taste	Spices not fried	Fry ground spices for a minute in the oil
Thin sauce	Too much liquid	Simmer uncovered, stirring, until it thickens
Sauce catches on the pan	Heat too high or not enough stirring	Lower the heat, add a splash of water and stir
Tough beef	Not cooked long enough	Keep simmering gently until it is tender
Too hot	Too much chilli	Add yogurt, coconut milk or more tomatoes and serve with rice

HOT POTS, SPICES 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.

Chilli and spices: chilli can sting skin and eyes, so wash your hands well after chopping it and don't touch your face. Add heat in small steps, and keep portions for children mild.

Slow-cooked leftovers: take leftovers out of the cooker and divide them into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months), and reheat in a pan or the oven until steaming hot, not in the slow cooker.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can fry spices in the right order without burning them.
- ☐ I can brown beef and simmer a curry until tender.
- ☐ I can make and freeze a spice paste.
- ☐ I can reduce a sauce until it clings to the beef.
- ☐ I can adjust the heat of a curry safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 5 is Beef Around the World: stroganoff, bulgogi, a Flemish-style stew and shredded beef tacos.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2

Chapter 5 · Beef Around the World

SKILL GOAL

Match the cut and the method to the dish, and cook four classic beef dishes from other countries.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Every country with cattle has found its own way to make beef taste wonderful, and they all solve the same problem: tender meat with a lot of flavour. There are only two real routes. **Quick dishes** (stroganoff, bulgogi) use a tender cut sliced thinly across the grain and cooked hot and fast. **Slow dishes** (a Flemish-style stew, shredded beef tacos) use a tough, flavourful cut cooked gently until it falls apart. For the cuts, see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 1; for braising, see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 5.

The flavour is where the countries differ: soured cream and paprika in Russia, soy, garlic, pear and sesame in Korea, onions, mustard and a sweet-sour edge in Flanders, and cumin, smoked paprika and lime in Mexico. This chapter has no beer, wine or brandy: stock, vinegar and mustard do the job instead.



Figure 5. Four dishes, two routes: quick cooking for tender, thinly sliced steak; slow cooking for tough cuts that fall apart.

The method

- **Slice across the grain.** Look for the lines of muscle fibre and cut across them, so each bite is short and tender.
- **Cook quick dishes in batches** in a very hot pan, so the meat browns instead of stewing in its own juice.
- **Brown slow dishes first,** then cook them covered and gently until a fork slides in.
- **Balance sweet, sour, salt and fat** at the end: lemon, vinegar, sugar or lime, tasting as you go.
- **Add soured cream off the heat,** or it will split.

DISH	CUT	HEAT	TIME (APPROXIMATE)
Beef stroganoff	Sirloin or rump	Hot pan	25 minutes
Bulgogi	Sirloin or rump, very thin	Hot pan	20 minutes plus marinating
Flemish-style stew	Chuck	Oven, gently	2½ to 3 hours
Shredded beef tacos	Chuck or brisket	Oven, gently	3 hours, then shred

HOT PANS, HOT POTS AND ALLERGENS

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

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: soured cream is dairy; soy sauce contains soy and gluten; bulgogi uses sesame; the stew uses bread and mustard; tortillas may contain gluten (corn tortillas are often gluten-free, but check the label). Use dairy-free or gluten-free swaps where needed.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Beef stroganoff (no alcohol)

25 minutes | 4 portions | searing thin strips of steak in batches

A creamy, paprika-scented dish of seared steak strips and mushrooms. The steak cooks in minutes, so everything else must be ready first. Serve it over rice or noodles; for the rice, see Cooking Skills: Rice 1.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	sirloin or rump steak, cut across the grain into strips about 1 cm wide
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	onion, thinly sliced
250 g	mushrooms, sliced
2	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tsp	sweet paprika
1 tsp	tomato purée
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
150 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
150 ml	soured cream
1 tsp	lemon juice
2 tbsp	chopped parsley

1. Pat the steak strips dry and season. Heat half the oil in a large pan until very hot and sear the beef in two batches for about **1 to 2 minutes** each, until browned outside. Set it aside.
2. Add the rest of the oil and cook the onion for 5 minutes. Add the mushrooms and cook for 5 to 6 minutes until golden, adding the garlic for the last minute.
3. Take the pan off the heat and stir in the paprika for 20 seconds. Add the purée, mustard and stock, scraping the base, and simmer for 3 minutes.
4. Return the beef and its juices, take the pan off the heat and stir in the soured cream and lemon juice. Don't boil it again. Taste, scatter with parsley and serve.

HOT PAN, SPLIT SAUCE AND ALLERGENS

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

Splitting soured cream: boiling soured cream makes it curdle. Add it off the heat and warm gently if needed.

Milk: soured cream is dairy. A dairy-free alternative works, but check how it behaves when heated.

LEVEL 2 · MARINADE

Korean-style bulgogi

20 minutes plus 30 minutes to 2 hours marinating | 4 portions

slicing thinly and marinating for quick cooking

Thin slices of beef in a sweet, savoury marinade, cooked in minutes and wrapped in lettuce with rice. Chilling the steak in the freezer for 30 minutes makes it firm enough to slice paper-thin.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	sirloin or rump steak
4 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	brown sugar
1 tbsp	toasted sesame oil
3	garlic cloves, crushed
1 tbsp	fresh ginger, grated
½	pear, peeled and grated (or an apple)
2	spring onions, sliced
1 tbsp	toasted sesame seeds
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil, for cooking
1	lettuce, leaves separated, to serve

1. Freeze the steak for 30 minutes, then slice it across the grain as thinly as you can, about 3 mm.
2. Mix the soy sauce, sugar, sesame oil, garlic, ginger and pear, add the beef and spring onions and turn to coat. Cover and marinate in the fridge for **30 minutes to 2 hours**.
3. Heat the oil in a large pan until very hot and cook the beef in batches, spreading it out, for about **2 to 3 minutes** until browned at the edges.
4. Scatter with sesame seeds and serve in lettuce leaves with rice.

> **HOT PAN, MARINADE AND ALLERGENS**

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

Marinade hygiene: the marinade has held raw beef, so never serve it as a sauce unless you boil it hard for several minutes first. Throw away what is left.

Allergens: soy sauce contains soy and gluten (use a gluten-free tamari if needed); sesame oil and seeds are a sesame allergen.

LEVEL 2 · SLOW

A Flemish-style beef stew (no beer)

30 minutes plus 2½ to 3 hours in the oven | 5 portions | building a sweet-sour stew without alcohol

A Belgian-style stew of beef and many onions with a sweet-sour edge, usually made with beer. Here stock, apple juice, vinegar and mustard take its place, and a slice of mustard bread thickens the sauce.

INGREDIENTS (5 PORTIONS)

800 g	chuck, in 4 cm cubes
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
3	onions, sliced
2	garlic cloves, crushed
1 tbsp	plain flour
350 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
100 ml	unsweetened apple juice
1 tbsp	brown sugar
2 tbsp	malt or cider vinegar
2	bay leaves
3	sprigs of thyme
2	slices of bread, spread with Dijon mustard

1. Heat the oven to 150°C (130°C fan). Brown the beef in batches in half the oil in a heavy casserole and set it aside.
2. Cook the onions in the rest of the oil for 15 minutes until soft and golden, adding the garlic for the last minute. Stir in the flour and cook for 1 minute.
3. Add the stock, apple juice, sugar, vinegar, bay and thyme, scraping the base. Return the beef and lay the mustard bread on top, mustard side down.
4. Cover and cook in the oven for **2½ to 3 hours**, until the beef is tender. Stir the bread into the sauce, taste for sweet and sour and adjust. Serve with chips or mash; for the potatoes, see Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1.

HOT POT, LONG COOKING 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.

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.

Allergens: the bread contains gluten and the mustard is an allergen. Check the stock for celery and gluten.

No alcohol: this book uses no beer, wine or brandy. Stock, vinegar, mustard and tomato give the same depth, so the dish is fine for children and anyone avoiding alcohol.

LEVEL 3 · SHRED

Mexican-style shredded beef tacos

20 minutes plus 3 hours in the oven | 5 portions | slow-cooking, shredding and crisping beef

Chuck cooked slowly with cumin, paprika and oregano until it shreds with a fork, then crisped under the grill for crunchy edges. Serve in warm tortillas with fresh toppings.

INGREDIENTS (5 PORTIONS)

900 g	chuck, in 3 or 4 large pieces
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	onion, chopped
4	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tsp	ground cumin
2 tsp	smoked paprika
1 tsp	dried oregano
1 tsp	mild chilli powder
400 g	tin of chopped tomatoes
150 ml	beef stock (low-salt)
3 tbsp	lime juice
1	bay leaf
10	small tortillas, warmed
1	red onion, finely sliced, to serve
2 tbsp	chopped coriander, to serve
4 tbsp	soured cream, to serve

1. Heat the oven to 150°C (130°C fan). Brown the beef pieces on all sides in the oil in a heavy casserole and set aside. Cook the onion for 5 minutes, adding the garlic and spices for the last minute.
2. Add the tomatoes, stock, half the lime juice and the bay leaf, return the beef, cover and cook in the oven for **3 hours**, until it shreds easily.

3. Shred the beef with two forks and stir it into the sauce. If it is thin, simmer uncovered until it thickens, then add the rest of the lime juice.
4. For crisp edges, spread the beef on a tray and grill for 4 to 5 minutes. Serve in warm tortillas with red onion, coriander and soured cream.

> HOT POT, SPICES 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.
>
> **Chilli and spices:** chilli can sting skin and eyes, so wash your hands well after chopping it and don't touch your face. Add heat in small steps, and keep portions for children mild.
>
> **Allergens:** tortillas may contain gluten; soured cream is dairy. Check the stock for celery.
>
> **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.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Marinade time

30 minutes and 2 hours.

1. Marinate half the bulgogi for 30 minutes and half for 2 hours, cook both and compare.

Look for: The longer marinade tastes deeper, but the pear can make the beef soft and mushy. Thirty minutes is often enough.

EXPERIMENT

Acid

Lemon or none.

1. Finish half the stroganoff with lemon juice and leave the other half plain.

Look for: The lemon makes the sauce taste brighter and less heavy. A little acid at the end lifts rich dishes.

EXPERIMENT

Slicing

With and across the grain.

1. Cut some of the steak with the grain and some across it, and cook both in the same pan.

Look for: The slices cut across the grain are tender, and those cut with it are chewy. Direction matters more than thickness.

EXPERIMENT

Cooking in batches

Crowded and spread out.

1. Cook half the bulgogi all at once in a crowded pan and half in two batches.

Look for: The crowded meat steams and turns grey; the batches brown. Take your time with the pan.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Beef stroganoff				
Bulgogi				
Flemish-style stew				

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Shredded beef tacos				
Marinade time				
Acid				
Slicing				
Cooking in batches				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Grey, watery stroganoff	Pan too crowded or not hot enough	Cook the beef in batches in a very hot pan
Chewy strips	Cut with the grain, or overcooked	Slice across the grain and cook for only a minute or two
Curdled soured cream	Boiled after adding	Add off the heat; whisk in a spoonful of hot sauce first
Soft, mushy bulgogi	Marinated too long	Keep to 30 minutes to 2 hours
Stew too sweet or sharp	Sugar and vinegar not balanced	Add a little more of the other, tasting as you go
Dry shredded beef	Cooked uncovered, or not enough sauce	Stir the shredded beef back into the juices and add stock

HOT PANS, RAW BEEF AND LEFTOVERS

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

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Leftovers: divide leftovers into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat

within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months). Reheat until steaming hot all the way through, and only once.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can slice steak thinly across the grain.
- ☐ I can sear beef in batches in a hot pan without it going grey.
- ☐ I can add soured cream without it splitting.
- ☐ I can slow-cook and shred beef.
- ☐ I can balance sweet, sour and salt at the end of a dish.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 6 is Grilling, Barbecue and Kebabs: cooking beef over direct and indirect heat.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2

Chapter 6 · Grilling, Barbecue and Kebabs

SKILL GOAL

Cook beef safely over direct and indirect heat, and know when it is done.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A barbecue gives you two kinds of heat. **Direct heat** (food right over the coals or flames) is hot and quick: it browns the outside of thin pieces such as steaks, burgers and sausages. **Indirect heat** (food beside the coals, lid closed) works like an oven: it cooks thick pieces through without burning the outside. Build a **two-zone fire** by banking the coals on one side, or by leaving one burner off on a gas barbecue, and you can sear on one side and finish on the other.

Light charcoal early: it is ready for cooking when the coals are covered in grey ash, which takes about 30 minutes (approximate). Cooking over flames makes smoke and flare-ups from dripping fat, so move food to the cool side rather than spraying water. Rest meat after cooking so the juices settle, just as for a roast (see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 4). Burgers and sausages made of mince are cooked right through; whole steaks can be pink. Buns for burgers are in Cooking Skills: Bread 1.

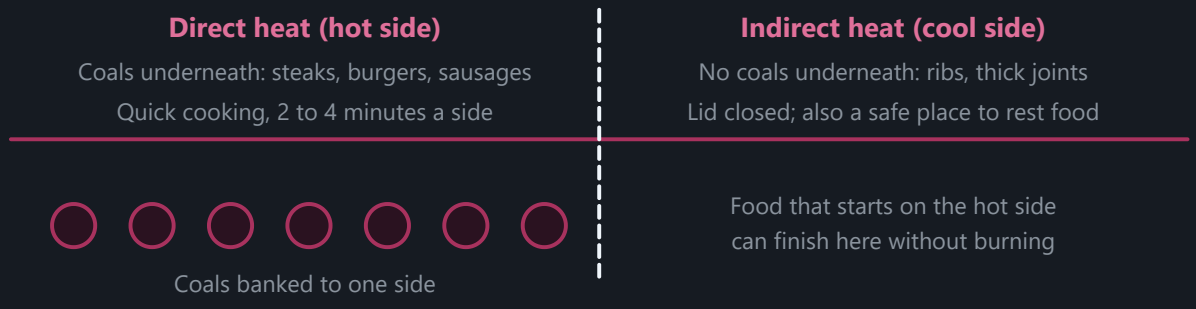


Figure 6. A two-zone fire: sear over the coals, then slide the food to the cool side to finish.

The method

- **Prepare the fire first:** light charcoal about 30 minutes ahead; turn gas on and preheat with the lid closed for 10 minutes.
- **Clean and oil the grate,** not the food, so it doesn't stick.
- **Bring steaks out of the fridge 20 minutes ahead,** pat them dry and season at the last minute.
- **Sear over direct heat,** then move thick pieces to indirect heat to finish.
- **Check with a thermometer:** mince 71°C; whole steaks to your liking; rest for 5 minutes before cutting.

FOOD	HEAT	TIME (APPROXIMATE)	DONE WHEN
Steaks (2.5 cm)	Direct	3 to 5 minutes a side	Your chosen doneness; rest 5 minutes
Sausages	Indirect then direct	15 to 20 minutes	No pink, 71°C
Kebabs	Direct, turned often	10 to 12 minutes	Beef browned, veg tender
Ribs (pre-cooked)	Indirect	15 to 20 minutes to glaze	Hot and sticky
Burgers	Direct then indirect	10 to 12 minutes	71°C in the centre

BARBECUE SAFETY, RAW BEEF AND ALLERGENS

Barbecue safety: use a barbecue outdoors only, never in a tent, garage or indoors, because it gives off carbon monoxide, which you cannot see or smell. Never use petrol or extra lighter fluid on lit coals, keep children and pets away, and let the ash cool fully (often a full day) before putting it in a metal container. Charred, burnt meat is best kept to a minimum (general guidance).

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Allergens: buns may contain gluten and sesame; mayonnaise contains egg; Worcestershire sauce contains fish; marinades may contain milk (yogurt) and mustard.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Grilled steak and sausages

20 minutes plus the fire | 4 portions | lighting the fire and searing over direct heat

The simplest barbecue meal. Steaks sear over the hot side; sausages start on the cool side so the inside cooks before the skin burns. Serve with a salad and bread.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

2	sirloin steaks, about 250 g each, 2.5 cm thick
8	beef sausages
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
½ tsp	black pepper

1. Build a two-zone fire. Take the steaks out of the fridge 20 minutes ahead, pat them dry, rub with oil and season.
2. Put the sausages on the **cool side** with the lid on for about 10 minutes, turning once, then move them to the hot side for 5 to 8 minutes to brown, until **cooked right through** with no pink and clear juices.
3. Sear the steaks on the hot side for about **3 to 5 minutes a side**, until browned, turning once. If flames flare, move them to the cool side.
4. Rest the steaks on a plate for **5 minutes**, then slice across the grain and serve with the sausages.

FIRE, RAW BEEF AND COOKED-THROUGH SAUSAGES

Barbecue safety: use a barbecue outdoors only, never in a tent, garage or indoors, because it gives off carbon monoxide, which you cannot see or smell. Never use petrol or extra lighter fluid on lit coals, keep children and pets away, and let the ash cool fully (often a full day) before putting it in a metal container. Charred, burnt meat is best kept to a minimum (general guidance).

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Sausages: sausages are minced beef, so they must be cooked right through: no pink inside, juices clear, about 71°C in the centre.

Resting: a steak keeps cooking and the juices settle while it rests. Cutting at once lets them run out.

LEVEL 2 · ON A STICK

Beef kebabs

25 minutes plus 1 hour marinating | 4 portions | cubing, marinating and skewering

Cubes of beef in a yogurt and spice marinade, threaded onto skewers. Put the beef and the vegetables on separate skewers, because they cook at different speeds and you can then take each off when it is ready.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

600 g	sirloin or rump, in 3 cm cubes
150 g	plain yogurt
2 tbsp	lemon juice
2	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tsp	ground cumin
2 tsp	sweet paprika
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
2	peppers, cut into 3 cm pieces
1	red onion, cut into wedges
1 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Mix the yogurt, lemon juice, garlic, cumin, paprika, 1 tbsp of the oil and the salt. Add the beef, turn to coat, cover and chill for **1 hour** (up to 8 hours).
2. If you use wooden skewers, soak them in water for 30 minutes. Thread the beef on some skewers and the peppers and onion on others, brushing the vegetables with the rest of the oil.
3. Grill over direct heat for **10 to 12 minutes**, turning every 2 to 3 minutes, until the beef is browned all over and cooked to your liking, and the vegetables are tender with charred edges.
4. Rest for 3 minutes and serve with flatbreads and a little yogurt.

> **FIRE, MARINADE AND ALLERGENS**

Barbecue safety: use a barbecue outdoors only, never in a tent, garage or indoors, because it gives off carbon monoxide, which you cannot see or smell. Never use petrol or extra lighter fluid on lit coals, keep children and pets away, and let the ash cool fully (often a full day) before putting it in a metal container. Charred, burnt meat is best kept to a minimum (general guidance).

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Marinade hygiene: the marinade has held raw beef, so throw away what is left. Don't brush it on cooked food.

Milk: the marinade contains yogurt, which is dairy. A dairy-free yogurt works.

LEVEL 2 · LOW AND SLOW

Barbecued ribs

30 minutes plus 2½ hours in the oven and 20 minutes on the grill | 4 portions | indirect heat and glazing

Ribs are tough, so they are cooked tender in the oven first and then glazed on the barbecue. That makes it easy to get them right whatever the weather, and the barbecue does what it does best: smoke, char and sticky glaze.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1.5 kg	beef short ribs
1 tbsp	smoked paprika
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
4 tbsp	ketchup
2 tbsp	cider vinegar
2 tbsp	brown sugar
1 tbsp	Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp	Dijon mustard
1	garlic clove, crushed

1. Heat the oven to 150°C (130°C fan). Rub the ribs with the paprika and salt, wrap them tightly in foil and cook on a tray for **2½ hours**, until the meat is tender and pulling back from the bone.
2. Make the glaze by simmering the ketchup, vinegar, sugar, Worcestershire sauce, mustard and garlic for 5 minutes until syrupy. Let the ribs cool a little in the foil.
3. On the **cool side** of the barbecue with the lid on, cook the ribs for 10 minutes, then brush with the glaze and cook for another 10 minutes, turning and brushing once more, until hot and sticky. Move them to the hot side for a minute at the end if you like a char, but watch the sugar, which burns easily.
4. Rest for 5 minutes, cut between the bones and serve with the rest of the glaze, boiled first if it touched raw meat.

FIRE, HOT FOIL AND ALLERGENS

Barbecue safety: use a barbecue outdoors only, never in a tent, garage or indoors, because it gives off carbon monoxide, which you cannot see or smell. Never use petrol or extra lighter fluid on lit coals, keep children and pets away, and let the ash cool fully (often a full day) before putting it in a metal container. Charred, burnt meat is best kept to a minimum (general guidance).

Hot foil and juices: open the foil parcel away from your face, because hot steam and fat escape. Use oven gloves.

Allergens: Worcestershire sauce contains fish (anchovies); mustard is an allergen. Leave out the Worcestershire sauce if needed.

LEVEL 3 · THE FULL PLATE

A barbecued burger with sides

45 minutes plus the fire | 4 portions | timing a whole barbecue meal

A burger, sweetcorn and a crunchy slaw, all timed to arrive together. Make the slaw first, because it improves as it stands, then cook the corn and burgers. For the burger method, see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 1.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

600 g	beef mince (15 to 20% fat), shaped into 4 patties
4	burger buns
4	corn on the cob, in their husks or peeled
2 tbsp	melted butter
¼	white cabbage, finely shredded
1	carrot, grated
3 tbsp	plain yogurt
1 tbsp	mayonnaise
1 tbsp	lemon juice
1 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Mix the cabbage, carrot, yogurt, mayonnaise, lemon juice and salt for the slaw and chill. Shape the patties, pressing a dip in the centre of each, and chill.
2. Start the corn on the **cool side** with the lid closed for 15 minutes, then move to the hot side for 5 minutes, turning, until browned in places. Brush with the butter.
3. Cook the burgers on the hot side for 3 to 4 minutes a side until browned, then move them to the cool side with the lid on until the centre reaches **71°C** and the juices run clear (about 5 to 8 more minutes). Toast the buns cut-side down for the last minute.
4. Serve the burgers in the buns with the corn and slaw.

FIRE, MINCE AND ALLERGENS

Barbecue safety: use a barbecue outdoors only, never in a tent, garage or indoors, because it gives off carbon monoxide, which you cannot see or smell. Never use petrol or extra lighter fluid

on lit coals, keep children and pets away, and let the ash cool fully (often a full day) before putting it in a metal container. Charred, burnt meat is best kept to a minimum (general guidance).

Minced beef must be cooked through: burgers, meatballs, sausages and anything made from mince must be cooked right through: no pink inside, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre (general guidance). A whole steak can be served rare because bacteria sit on the surface; mincing spreads them through the meat.

Allergens: buns may contain gluten and sesame; mayonnaise contains egg; yogurt is dairy.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Direct or indirect heat

Sear then finish, or hot all the way.

1. Cook two thick steaks, one only over direct heat and one seared and then moved to the cool side with the lid on.

Look for: The direct steak can be burnt outside before the centre is ready; the second cooks more evenly. Thick food wants indirect heat.

EXPERIMENT

Marinating

Marinated and plain.

1. Marinate half the kebab beef for an hour and cook the rest plain, with only salt.

Look for: The marinated beef tastes of the spices and browns well, while the plain tastes more of the meat. Both are good.

EXPERIMENT

Resting

Cut at once and after 5 minutes.

1. Cut one steak straight away and rest the other, then compare the plates.

Look for: The first leaves a pool of juice behind; the rested steak stays juicier in the mouth.

EXPERIMENT

Lid on or off

Closed and open.

1. Cook a pair of sausages with the lid on and another pair with it off, turning both often.

Look for: With the lid on they cook more evenly through, with a smokier flavour. Without it they brown faster but may stay raw inside.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Steak and sausages				
Beef kebabs				
Barbecued ribs				
Barbecued burger and sides				
Direct or indirect heat				
Marinating				
Resting				
Lid on or off				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Burnt outside, raw inside	Heat too high or food too thick	Move to the cool side with the lid on
Flare-ups	Dripping fat on flames	Move food to the cool side; don't spray water
Food sticks to the grate	Grate not clean or oiled, or flipped too soon	Clean and oil the grate; let food release before turning
Dry steak	Overcooked or not rested	Use a thermometer and rest for 5 minutes
Burnt sticky glaze	Sugar added too early	Brush the glaze on in the last 10 minutes
Kebab beef raw, vegetables burnt	Cooked on the same skewer	Use separate skewers

FIRE, RAW BEEF AND LEFTOVERS

Barbecue safety: use a barbecue outdoors only, never in a tent, garage or indoors, because it gives off carbon monoxide, which you cannot see or smell. Never use petrol or extra lighter fluid on lit coals, keep children and pets away, and let the ash cool fully (often a full day) before putting it in a metal container. Charred, burnt meat is best kept to a minimum (general guidance).

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Leftovers: divide leftovers into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months). Reheat until steaming hot all the way through, and only once.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can build a two-zone fire.
- ☐ I can sear a steak and rest it.
- ☐ I can cook sausages and burgers right through.
- ☐ I can skewer, marinate and cook kebabs.
- ☐ I can glaze ribs without burning them.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 7 is Cuts and Basic Butchery: buying and cutting a larger piece of beef.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2

Chapter 7 · Cuts and Basic Butchery

SKILL GOAL

Buy a larger piece of beef and cut it into what you need, safely and with little waste.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A big piece of beef costs less per kilo than portions, and it gives you several meals once you cut it up yourself. Tender cuts from the back (sirloin, fillet, rump) are for quick cooking; tougher cuts from the legs and front (chuck, shin, brisket) are for slow cooking. Look at the **grain**, the lines of muscle fibre, because you cut across it for slicing and with the natural **seams** between muscles for cubing. For the cuts in more detail, see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 1.

You don't need a butcher's kit: a **sharp** chef's or boning knife, a large board that doesn't slip, string, and a scale are enough. Chill the meat well first, because cold beef is firmer and easier to cut. For knife grips and safety, see Cooking Skills: Knife Skills 1.



Figure 7. A cuts map: tender cuts from the back for quick cooking, hard-working cuts from the legs and front for slow cooking.

The method

- **Chill the beef well** for firm, clean cuts, and put a damp cloth under the board so it doesn't slip.
- **Use a sharp knife** and long, smooth strokes, not sawing.
- **Trim the silverskin,** the shiny, tough membrane, which doesn't soften in cooking. Slide the knife flat under it.
- **Cut along the seams** between muscles to separate a big piece into smaller ones.
- **Weigh before and after** to see how much is waste, and keep the trimmings for stock or mince.

JOB	CUT	TOOL	TIME (APPROXIMATE)
Trim and tie a joint	Topside or sirloin joint	Knife and string	15 minutes
Cube for stews	Chuck	Chef's knife	20 minutes
Slice steaks	Whole sirloin	Long sharp knife	20 minutes
Grind mince	Chuck and short rib	Food processor or mincer	20 minutes

SHARP KNIVES, RAW BEEF AND FREEZING

Sharp knives: a sharp knife is safer than a blunt one because it needs less force. Cut away from your body, steady the board with a damp cloth under it, curl your fingertips on the meat, and never try to catch a falling knife. Wash knives by hand, one at a time, and never leave one in the washing-up water.

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Freezing and defrosting: freeze beef in flat, labelled bags with the date, for up to about 3 months (general guidance). Defrost it in the fridge on a plate on the bottom shelf, never on the worktop, and cook it within about a day of defrosting.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Trimming and tying a joint

15 minutes plus roasting | 6 portions | trimming silverskin and tying a neat shape

A joint of topside or sirloin sold untied can be uneven and cook badly. Trimming it and tying it with string every few centimetres gives it an even shape, so it cooks evenly and slices neatly. Roast it as in Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 4.

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

1.2 kg	topside or sirloin joint
3	metres of butcher's string
1 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
½ tsp	black pepper

1. Chill the joint, then slide a sharp knife flat under any silverskin and trim it away in long strokes. Leave a thin layer of fat, about 5 mm, which keeps the joint moist.
2. Fold any thin end under to make an even thickness. Cut lengths of string and tie the joint every **3 to 4 cm**, pulling each knot snug but not so tight that it cuts in.
3. Rub with the oil, salt and pepper. Roast following Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 4, and remove the string before slicing.

SHARP KNIFE AND RAW BEEF

Sharp knives: a sharp knife is safer than a blunt one because it needs less force. Cut away from your body, steady the board with a damp cloth under it, curl your fingertips on the meat, and never try to catch a falling knife. Wash knives by hand, one at a time, and never leave one in the washing-up water.

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Resting: rest a roast for 20 minutes under foil before carving.

LEVEL 2 · STEWS

Cubing chuck for stews

20 minutes | About 4 stew portions of 250 g | cutting along seams into even cubes

Ready-cubed stewing beef is often uneven and full of gristle. Cutting your own from a piece of chuck lets you trim the tough bits and make every cube the same size, so they all cook at the same speed.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1.2 kg	piece of chuck
4	freezer bags
1	marker pen, for labels

1. Chill the chuck. Find the natural seams, the thin lines of white connective tissue between muscles, and cut along them to separate the piece into 3 or 4 smaller muscles.
2. Trim away the thick gristle and any hard fat, leaving the small threads of connective tissue, which melt in slow cooking. Cut each muscle into slices, then strips, then **cubes of 3 to 4 cm**.
3. Weigh the cubes into four portions of about 250 g, put each in a labelled bag with the date, flatten and freeze. Keep the trimmings for stock.

SHARP KNIFE AND FREEZING

Sharp knives: a sharp knife is safer than a blunt one because it needs less force. Cut away from your body, steady the board with a damp cloth under it, curl your fingertips on the meat, and never try to catch a falling knife. Wash knives by hand, one at a time, and never leave one in the washing-up water.

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Freezing and defrosting: freeze beef in flat, labelled bags with the date, for up to about 3 months (general guidance). Defrost it in the fridge on a plate on the bottom shelf, never on the worktop, and cook it within about a day of defrosting.

LEVEL 2 · STEAKS

Slicing steaks from a whole sirloin

20 minutes | 4 steaks of about 250 g | slicing across the grain into even steaks

A whole trimmed sirloin (or striploin) is cheaper than buying steaks and lets you choose the thickness. Check that it is trimmed, then cut steaks of an even 3 cm across the muscle.

INGREDIENTS (4 STEAKS)

1.2 kg	whole trimmed sirloin or striploin
1	sheet of baking parchment, cut into squares
1	tray, for freezing

1. Chill the sirloin. Trim any remaining silverskin from the top, and trim the fat cap to about 5 mm.
2. Cut straight down across the muscle with long, smooth strokes into steaks **3 cm thick**, measuring if you need to. Use the thin end pieces for kebabs or a stir-fry.
3. Put a square of parchment between steaks you plan to freeze, so they separate, then bag and label. Cook the others within about 2 days, as in Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 2.

SHARP KNIFE AND FREEZING

Sharp knives: a sharp knife is safer than a blunt one because it needs less force. Cut away from your body, steady the board with a damp cloth under it, curl your fingertips on the meat, and never try to catch a falling knife. Wash knives by hand, one at a time, and never leave one in the washing-up water.

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Freezing and defrosting: freeze beef in flat, labelled bags with the date, for up to about 3 months (general guidance). Defrost it in the fridge on a plate on the bottom shelf, never on the worktop, and cook it within about a day of defrosting.

LEVEL 3 · MINCE

Grinding mince at home

30 minutes including chilling | 4 portions | chilling and grinding beef for burgers and sauces

Home-ground mince has a better texture than shop mince because you choose the cuts and the fat. A mix of chuck for beefy flavour and short rib for fat makes excellent burgers. The meat must be very cold, or it smears instead of cutting.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	chuck, in 3 cm cubes
200 g	boneless short rib or brisket with some fat, in 3 cm cubes
1 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Spread the cubes on a tray and freeze for **20 to 30 minutes** until firm outside but not frozen solid. Chill the processor bowl and blade too.
2. Pulse the beef in two or three batches, in short bursts of 1 or 2 seconds, about 10 to 15 pulses, until coarsely ground. Stop before it turns into a paste.
3. Fry a spoonful with salt to taste, then shape and cook as in Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 1. Cook the same day or freeze at once, and wash the equipment in hot soapy water straight away.

HOME-GROUND MINCE AND MINCED BEEF

Home-ground mince: mince spoils faster than a whole piece because grinding spreads bacteria through it. Keep the meat very cold, work quickly, wash the equipment in hot soapy water straight away, and cook or freeze the mince on the same day.

Minced beef must be cooked through: burgers, meatballs, sausages and anything made from mince must be cooked right through: no pink inside, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre (general guidance). A whole steak can be served rare because bacteria sit on the surface; mincing spreads them through the meat.

Sharp knives: a sharp knife is safer than a blunt one because it needs less force. Cut away from your body, steady the board with a damp cloth under it, curl your fingertips on the meat, and

> never try to catch a falling knife. Wash knives by hand, one at a time, and never leave one in the washing-up water.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Trim waste

How much goes in the bin?

1. Weigh the chuck before and after trimming, and work out the percentage lost.

Look for: Often 10 to 20 percent is gristle and fat; the more you trim, the tidier the stew but the more you pay per portion. Use the trimmings for stock.

EXPERIMENT

Tying or not

Tied and loose.

1. Roast two small joints, one tied and one loose, and slice both.

Look for: The tied joint is a neat, even shape that slices cleanly; the loose one flattens and cooks unevenly.

EXPERIMENT

Fresh or frozen

Firm from the freezer.

1. Slice one steak when the meat is fridge-cold and one after 30 minutes in the freezer.

Look for: The firmer piece cuts cleaner, thinner slices. Chilling beef is a butcher's trick.

EXPERIMENT

Hand-cut or ground mince

Chopped, ground and shop-bought.

1. Make three small patties: one hand-chopped, one from your ground mince and one from shop mince.

Look for: The hand-chopped is coarse and meaty, the home-ground is looser than shop mince, and shop mince is finest and more compact. Choose by the dish.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Tied joint				
Cubed chuck				
Sirloin steaks				
Home-ground mince				
Trim waste				
Tying or not				
Fresh or frozen				
Hand-cut or ground mince				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Ragged, torn cuts	Blunt knife or sawing	Sharpen the knife and cut with long, smooth strokes

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Meat slipping about	Board moving or beef wet	Put a damp cloth under the board and pat the beef dry
Tough steaks	Cut with the grain	Cut across the grain
Mince like a paste	Meat or bowl too warm, or over-processed	Chill everything and pulse in short bursts
String slipped off	Knots too loose	Tie every 3 to 4 cm and pull snug
Uneven stew cubes	Cutting without a plan	Separate along the seams first, then cube evenly

KNIVES, RAW BEEF AND LEFTOVERS

Sharp knives: a sharp knife is safer than a blunt one because it needs less force. Cut away from your body, steady the board with a damp cloth under it, curl your fingertips on the meat, and never try to catch a falling knife. Wash knives by hand, one at a time, and never leave one in the washing-up water.

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Leftovers: divide leftovers into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months). Reheat until steaming hot all the way through, and only once.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can trim silverskin and fat from a piece of beef.
- ☐ I can tie a joint so it keeps its shape.
- ☐ I can cube chuck evenly and portion it for the freezer.
- ☐ I can slice steaks across the grain.
- ☐ I can grind mince at home safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 8 is A Beef Feast: planning and serving a big beef meal.

Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2

Chapter 8 · A Beef Feast

SKILL GOAL

Plan, time and serve a big beef meal by working backwards from the moment you sit down.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A feast is not harder cooking, it is better planning. The secret is to **work backwards**: decide when you will eat, write down every task, and put each one on a timeline, with as many as possible done the day before. Dishes that taste better after a night (stews, slaw, marinades) go first; quick dishes (burgers, steaks) go last. You also need to count your **oven rings and oven shelves**, because a crowded kitchen is the real limit.

Scale recipes carefully (the ingredient lists on this page change with the portion count) and write out the shopping list from the final menu. Food safety matters more with a crowd: keep cold food cold and hot food hot, chill leftovers within 1 to 2 hours, and don't leave food out for more than about 2 hours (general guidance). Dishes from earlier chapters are named in full: Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapters 1 (burgers), 3 (slow cooker and pot roasts) and 6 (barbecue); and Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1 for the sides.

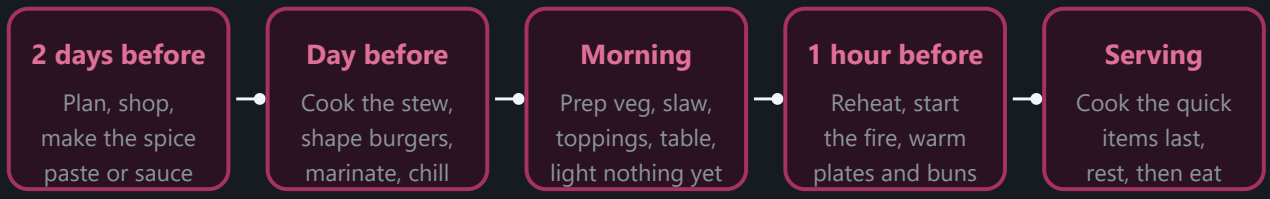


Figure 8. A make-ahead plan: most of the work is done before the day, and only the quick cooking is left for the end.

The method

- **Choose the menu and the time** you want to serve, then write every task on a timeline, working back from that time.
- **Cook slow dishes the day before;** they improve overnight. Cool, chill and reheat until steaming hot.
- **Prepare everything you can in the morning:** chop, slice, mix sauces and set the table.
- **Cook the quick items last** and rest them while you plate the rest.
- **Write a shopping list from the final menu,** and add a safety margin of 10 to 20 percent for a crowd.

FEAST	GUESTS	MAKE AHEAD	COOKED AT THE END
Burger party	8	Patties, sauce, toppings	Burgers (about 20 minutes)
Barbecue feast	8	Ribs, slaw, marinade	Kebabs, sausages, corn
Slow-cooked dinner	10	The whole stew	Reheat, mash
Your own dish	Any	Whatever suits it	Whatever is quick

COOKING FOR A CROWD

Hot food and cold food: keep hot food above about 63°C (in the oven or on the hob) and cold food in the fridge until serving. Don't leave food out for more than about 2 hours.

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Allergens: ask guests about allergies before you plan the menu, and label the dishes. The common ones here are gluten (buns, bread), milk (cheese, soured cream, yogurt), egg (mayonnaise), mustard, celery, soy and sesame.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · BURGER PARTY

A burger party for 8

45 minutes on the day, plus 1 hour the day before | 8 portions | batching burgers and a build-your-own bar

Burgers are the easiest crowd dish because everyone builds their own. Shape and chill the patties and make the sauce the day before, set out the toppings in bowls, and cook the burgers in two batches so they come out together. For the burger method, see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 1.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

1.2 kg	beef mince (15 to 20% fat), shaped into 8 patties of 150 g
8	burger buns
8	slices of burger cheese
2	tomatoes, sliced
1	lettuce, leaves separated
2	red onions, thinly sliced
8	gherkins, sliced
4 tbsp	mayonnaise
4 tbsp	ketchup
1 tbsp	mustard
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil

1. The day before: shape the patties, with a dip in the centre of each, separate them with parchment, cover and chill. Mix the mayonnaise, ketchup and mustard into a sauce.
2. On the day: set out the toppings, sauce and buns in bowls, 30 minutes before. Heat the oven to 100°C to keep cooked burgers warm.
3. Season the patties and cook them in two batches in hot pans or on the barbecue for **10 to 12 minutes** each, until the centre reaches **71°C** and the juices run clear. Add cheese for the last minute and keep the first batch warm.
4. Toast the buns, and let guests build their own.

MINCE FOR A CROWD

Minced beef must be cooked through: burgers, meatballs, sausages and anything made from mince must be cooked right through: no pink inside, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre (general guidance). A whole steak can be served rare because bacteria sit on the surface; mincing spreads them through the meat.

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Allergens: buns contain gluten and may contain sesame; cheese and mayonnaise are dairy and egg. Offer a gluten-free bun if needed.

LEVEL 2 · BARBECUE

A barbecue feast for 8

1 hour on the day, plus the day before | 8 portions | running two heat zones for a mixed grill

Ribs are cooked tender in the oven the day before, so they only need glazing on the day. The kebabs, sausages and corn then share the fire, with the slaw ready in the fridge. For the methods, see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 6.

INGREDIENTS (8 PORTIONS)

2 kg	beef short ribs, oven-cooked the day before and chilled
800 g	sirloin or rump, in 3 cm cubes, marinated in yogurt, lemon and spices
8	beef sausages
8	corn on the cob
4 tbsp	ketchup
2 tbsp	cider vinegar
2 tbsp	brown sugar
½	white cabbage, finely shredded
2	carrots, grated
150 g	plain yogurt
2 tbsp	butter, melted

1. The day before: cook the ribs in foil at 150°C (130°C fan) for 2½ hours, cool, chill, and make the glaze from the ketchup, vinegar and sugar. Marinate the beef cubes and thread them on skewers. Make the slaw with the cabbage, carrots and yogurt.
2. On the day: light the fire 30 minutes ahead and take the ribs and kebabs out of the fridge 20 minutes before cooking.
3. Start the sausages and corn on the **cool side** with the lid on, glaze and warm the ribs there for 20 minutes, then sear the kebabs on the hot side for **10 to 12 minutes**, turning often. Move the sausages to the hot side to brown and check they are **cooked right through**.

4. Brush the corn with the butter, rest the meat for 5 minutes and serve everything at once with the slaw.

FIRE AND A CROWD

Barbecue safety: use a barbecue outdoors only, never in a tent, garage or indoors, because it gives off carbon monoxide, which you cannot see or smell. Never use petrol or extra lighter fluid on lit coals, keep children and pets away, and let the ash cool fully (often a full day) before putting it in a metal container. Charred, burnt meat is best kept to a minimum (general guidance).

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Cooked-through meat: sausages and kebabs made from mince must be cooked right through. Whole-muscle kebabs are cooked to your taste, but check the centre of the first piece.

Allergens: yogurt is dairy; the glaze may contain fish if you add Worcestershire sauce.

LEVEL 2 · SLOW

A slow-cooked dinner for 10

45 minutes the day before, 3 hours cooking, 30 minutes on the day | 10 portions

scaling a stew and reheating it safely

A big beef and root vegetable stew that you cook the day before, so the flavour improves and the only job on the day is reheating and mashing. Cooling it quickly and reheating it until steaming hot are the safety steps. For the method, see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 3; for the mash, see Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1.

INGREDIENTS (10 PORTIONS)

1.8 kg	chuck, in 4 cm cubes
4 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
3	onions, chopped
4	carrots, in chunks
3	parsnips, in chunks
4	celery sticks, sliced
4	garlic cloves, crushed
4 tbsp	tomato purée
1 litre	beef stock (low-salt)
3	bay leaves
6	sprigs of thyme
2 kg	floury potatoes, for mash
100 g	butter, for mash
200 ml	milk, for mash

1. The day before: heat the oven to 150°C (130°C fan). Brown the beef in batches in the oil in a big casserole and set it aside. Cook the onions, carrots, parsnips and celery for 10 minutes, adding the garlic and purée for the last 2.

2. Return the beef, add the stock, bay and thyme, cover and cook for **2½ to 3 hours** until very tender.
3. Cool the stew quickly: divide it into shallow containers, cool within **1 to 2 hours**, then cover and chill. Don't leave it in the hot casserole overnight.
4. On the day: reheat the stew gently in the oven or a pan until **steaming hot all the way through**. Boil and mash the potatoes with the butter and milk, and serve.

> **COOLING, REHEATING AND HOT POTS**
>
> **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.
>
> **Leftovers:** divide leftovers into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months). Reheat until steaming hot all the way through, and only once.
>
> **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.
>
> **Allergens:** the mash contains milk and butter; check the stock for celery and gluten.

LEVEL 3 · YOURS

Your own signature beef dish

Your choice | 4 portions | building a dish from the methods you know

Choose one item from each list below, put them together and write the result on a recipe card. **Cut:** steak, mince, chuck, short rib. **Method:** hot pan, slow braise, barbecue, oven roast. **Flavour:** paprika and tomato, soy and ginger, mustard and onion, cumin and lime. **Side:** rice, mash, bread, a salad. The ingredient list below is a starting template to rewrite for your dish.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

700 g	the beef cut of your choice
2 tbsp	sunflower or rapeseed oil
1	onion or other aromatic base
2	garlic cloves
2 tsp	your main spice or seasoning
300 ml	stock or other liquid, if braising
1 tbsp	acid to finish (lemon, lime or vinegar)
1 pinch	salt, tasted at the end

1. Decide the cut, method, flavour and side, and write the plan on a recipe card with the amounts for four portions.
2. Cook it, noting the actual times and temperatures. Use a thermometer for mince (71°C) and for roasts and steaks.
3. Taste at the end and adjust salt, acid and sweetness. Write down what you would change, and cook it again next week.

YOUR OWN DISH

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Minced beef must be cooked through: burgers, meatballs, sausages and anything made from

> mince must be cooked right through: no pink inside, juices running clear, about 71°C in the centre (general guidance). A whole steak can be served rare because bacteria sit on the surface; mincing spreads them through the meat.
>
> **Allergens:** write down every ingredient on the card, so you can tell guests exactly what is in it.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

A timed feast

Write the timeline, then follow it.

1. Plan one of the feasts on paper, working backwards, then note when each step really happened.

Look for: Most plans run late at the end because of oven and hob space. Add 15 minutes to every quick step next time.

EXPERIMENT

Swap one dish

Change the menu.

1. Replace one dish in a feast with a dish from another chapter, such as the goulash from chapter 4.

Look for: A swap changes the whole timeline, so it shows how much a plan depends on the oven.

EXPERIMENT

Cooked ahead or on the day

Stew made the day before and the same day.

1. Cook half the stew the day before and make half the stew on the day, and taste both.

Look for: The stew made ahead is deeper and richer, and the day-of stew thinner. Make-ahead is better for flavour and easier for you.

EXPERIMENT

Your own signature dish

Write it down.

1. Cook your signature dish twice, changing one thing the second time, and record both on the card.

Look for: A recipe only becomes yours once you have written down what you changed and why.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Burger party				
Barbecue feast				
Slow-cooked dinner				
Signature dish				
A timed feast				
Swap one dish				
Cooked ahead or on the day				
Your own signature dish				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Everything is ready at different times	No timeline	Write the tasks backwards from the serving time
Cold food in the middle of the table	Reheated too little	Reheat until steaming hot all the way through
No space in the oven	Too many oven dishes	Use the hob, barbecue or slow cooker for some items
Running out of food	Portions not scaled	Plan 10 to 20 percent extra and add a cheap side
Dry burgers or steaks	Cooked too long or not rested	Use a thermometer and rest the meat
Stressed cook	Doing everything on the day	Cook as much as possible the day before

LEFTOVERS, RAW BEEF AND REHEATING

Leftovers: divide leftovers into shallow containers within about 1 to 2 hours, cool, then chill and eat within about 2 days (or freeze for up to about 3 months). Reheat until steaming hot all the way through, and only once.

Raw beef: keep raw beef on its own board and plate, away from food that won't be cooked. Wash your hands, boards, knives and surfaces in hot soapy water afterwards, never put cooked food back on a plate that held raw meat, and store raw beef on the bottom shelf of the fridge.

Reheating: reheat leftovers only once, until steaming hot all the way through (about 75°C or more), and don't reheat them in a slow cooker.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can plan a meal by working backwards from the serving time.
- ☐ I can cook a big dish ahead and cool and reheat it safely.
- ☐ I can run a burger party or a barbecue for a crowd.
- ☐ I can scale a recipe and its shopping list.
- ☐ I have written down my own signature beef dish.

NEXT CHAPTER

This is the last chapter of Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2. Next in the series, consider Cooking Skills: Chicken 1 (planned): roasting a whole bird, jointing, pan-frying, grilling, poaching and stews.