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## How to properly thaw a steak

You don't have to be a supertaster to know that not everyone knows how to cook a piece of meat. Some amateur chefs start with the wrong cut, while others use the wrong heat, and others still slice into the meal before its time. Cooking a steak in your kitchen is a relatively basic skill, but it's not exactly intuitive. The cooks at Stack Exchange offer a few friendly tips to ensure your next dinner party doesn't go down in flames.Photo by Matthew P. Hunt.Question:Whenever I cook steak at home, something goes wrong. Often, I burn the outside and cut into a cold, totally raw center. When I lower the temperature on my grill pan, my steak dries out and resembles cork.Clearly, I need help. Who's got it?— Lorenzo (originally asked here)Accepted Answer: Stovetop Step-by-StepYou should be able to cook a reasonable steak on your stovetop using a cast iron grill pan, and hopefully you've got a strong enough exhaust or plentiful ventilation to handle the smoke.First: Oil a cast iron pan (with canola or such), then heat it very hot, until it starts to smoke. Make sure the meat is completely dry on the outside (wipe with a paper towel, water will prevent browning) and gently place in the pan. Leave it there for a minute or two (it'll smoke quite a bit!), rotate 90° to get the nice grill marks. Leave for another minute or two. Flip, and repeat for the other side.It may splatter, have a splatter screen handy. It will smoke, quite a bit, make sure the exhaust is on high.You will probably have a medium-rare steak now. Using a thinner cut will make it more well done (you can cut a thick steak in half with your chef's knife, making two thin steaks), so will plopping it in the oven (it's up to you whether you'd like to use the oven before or after searing). I like 'em medium rare...Remember to let the meat rest for 5 minutes or so before serving.Also, if your steaks are coming out tough, you're probably using the wrong cut of meat, or a terrible grade.Edit by runtscho: There is a reason this answer specifies a cast iron pan. If you are limited in your cookware choice, pay attention to the maximum temperature your pan can tolerate. If you are using a non-stick pan, you have to use medium heat and wait longer, or else you'll damage the pan. (And sorry, but you can't get it as tasty as when you use high heat). See this Q&A for a few other uses for your cast iron pan.— Answered by derobertAnswer: Use The Rule of ThumbLoosely touch one of your fingers to your thumb: forefinger for rare, middle finger for medium rare, ring finger for medium, and pinky finger if you like your steak well done.The tension in your muscle below the thumb should resemble the toughness of the steak you want to cook.But remember, the steak will continue to cook as long as 5 minutes after you remove it from direct heat. Aim for undercooked. You can't uncook a steak once it's overcooked.— Answered by CharlieAnswer: Let it RestAn important part of the process is allowing your steak to rest for up to ten minutes before serving (depending on size). Some experienced chefs recommend letting your steak rest for half the time it was over a flame.Resting is necessary because at temperature the muscle fibres have tightened and are unable to retain their juices. A steak straight off the heat and cut open will instantly lose all its juices.If you allow the steak to cool for a few minutes, then the muscle fibres relax, hold the juices better and you end up with a much more flavorful steak.— Answered by KevAnswer: Most of What You Know About Cooking Steak Is Probably WrongFirst: Read the Food Lab articles on cooking steak.Start with a decent cut. Typically, these will be cuts from the rib (Ribeye), short loin (Tenderloin, T-Bone, Porterhouse, Top Loin), and sirloin (Sirloin, Top Sirloin) parts of the steer. Whichever cut you go with should have a nice, even distribution of white fat throughout the muscle (called marbling). Read About.com's writup on steak grades & cuts for details.Second: ALWAYS let your meat come to room temperature before doing anything to it. Then, salt and pepper it and let it stand at least 40 minutes before cooking, or cook it immediately.Third: Get a nice heavy pan and a high smoke point oil (like canola) and heat a thin layer of oil until it just starts to smoke. Don't let it smoke too long lest the oil break down and affect the flavor of your steak. Avoid butter as the milk solids will burn before achieving a high enough temperature. And see here for the right way to dispose of fats and oils after you're done.Fourth: Add your steak to the pan and flip every 15-30 seconds until desired doneness is reached. This is where most people get it wrong. Not flipping is an almost guaranteed recipe for unevenly cooked steak. The temperature in the pan will fluctuate no matter how high you have it cranked up, which means one side will be cooked more than the other. Flip to equalize any temperature differences in the pan.Fifth: Forget about shortcuts for testing doneness and get yourself a decent meat thermometer. Testing temperature is the only surefire way to ensuring steak is done to your liking.Last: LET IT REST! From 5-15 minutes, depending on the thickness and cut. Not giving it time to rest is a surefire way to end up with dry steak.Enjoy!— Answered by Andy Rice Think you know the proper way to cook a steak? Leave your suggestion in the comments or submit it at Stack Exchange, an expert knowledge exchange on diverse topics from software programming to cycling to scientific skepticism. For the backyard chef and the experienced foodie alike, nothing means luxury like a fine steak, with melt-in-your-mouth tenderness and rich flavor.Although "steak" can designate the meat of several different animals, in the U.S. it almost invariably means beefsteak. Steak comes in a variety of cuts and grades, and it also offers a surprising range of flavors and textures. Some of these qualities depend on preparation; others depend on how the cow was raised and when it was slaughtered.Typically to make a steak, the meat is butchered in cross-section -- the cut is perpendicular to the muscle fibers, or grain [source: Oklahoma State University]. The meat is marbled -- that is, it contains a certain amount of fat. In many cases, marbling leads to tenderness and flavor [source: Chul]. There is some debate about the quality of marbling, as well as the relationship between marbling and the diet of the cow [source: Time].For anyone who used to struggle with the spelling difference between "stake" and "steak," it should come as a comfort to learn that the words are actually related. "Steak" comes from a root meaning "to roast on a stake" [source: Merriam-Webster]. That's not the only way to cook a steak any more, but there's still something a bit primal about a perfect cut of beef. We do tend to associate steak with cowboys and manly men, and indeed, the United States leads the world in beef consumption -- just under 70 pounds (31.75 kg) per person, per year [source: Cattle Network]. By contrast, the figure is about 19 pounds (8.7 kg) in Japan -- less than one-third as much [source: AsiaKan]!In this article, we'll look at the different varieties and cuts of steak on the market today. You'll also learn some facts and opinions on the all-important topic of cooking steak. But first, let's head over to the farm, for a look at how cattle-raising methods affect flavor. An Arctic frog can spend weeks frozen solid. It may seem like the frog's dead -- there's no respiration, brain activity or heartbeat -- but once things warm up, the frog thaws out and goes about its normal business. How is this possible? There's a chemical in the Arctic frog's bloodstream known as a cryoprotectant, which acts as a kind of antifreeze. Even though much of the frog is frozen, the cryoprotectant prevents ice crystals from forming in the cells, which could do long-term damage.If Arctic frogs can survive a frozen hibernation, could people do the same? It sounds like an idea straight out of science fiction, and indeed, the term "corpsicle" was popularized by writers of the genre to refer to people who were frozen and then thawed decades later. But there are more than a hundred people who would probably prefer that we didn't use the word "corpsicle" to describe them. These are the people who have chosen to undergo cryopreservation in the hopes that they can be revived down the road, when cures for their ailments or the means for immortality have been discovered. In the parlance of cryonics, these are the "suspended people."Cryonics is the preservation of a human being at very low temperatures. But human beings aren't like Arctic frogs; we lack a natural cryoprotectant in our bodies. That's why some people have joined cryonics facilities. For roughly \$150,000, a cryonics facility will take a body and pump it full of cryoprotectant in a process known as vitrification. This cools the body without freezing it, as with the Arctic frogs, ice crystals in the body would cause damage upon thawing. The body is placed on dry ice until it reaches a temperature of -202 degrees Fahrenheit (-130 degrees Celsius) before it's put into a large tank of liquid nitrogen, which cools the body down even further. The body remains in the tank until it is reanimated.So what happens when you thaw a suspended person? It's impossible to say -- no one has done it yet. Researchers still don't know exactly how to warm a person back up without doing damage to the body. You might wonder, then, how a facility can charge \$150,000 for a job it can't finish. You aren't alone -- there are many critics who argue that cryonics facilities are cheating their customers.Still, there are others who believe that the revival of a suspended person isn't far off, thanks to the rapid development of nanotechnology. If the field comes into being the way some researchers hope, very tiny little machines could be sent throughout a preserved body to fix all of its flaws -- everything from eliminating cancer from cells to restoring perfect vision to undoing any damage caused by the vitrification process. In other words, each person could be brought back whole and intact. What would such a thing mean for the human race? Ethicists have plenty of time to discuss such a thing; meanwhile, the suspended people wait. When it comes to cooking a delicious steak at home, you can't go wrong (or get much easier) than using a pan -- but the type of pan you use matters. When selecting the best pans for steak, your decision should depend on how you plan on cooking your meat. Some cast iron pans come pre-seasoned -- and since they're heavy, their temperatures are more stable (and they stay hotter for longer periods of time). Stainless steel options adjust quickly to temperature changes and can handle acidic ingredients without damaging the finish. They're also dishwasher safe, whereas cast iron pans are not.Cast IronCast iron pans that arrive pre-seasoned -- like the Lodge selections listed below -- are nonstick, and the seasoning helps protect them from rust. (Some cast iron pans aren't pre-seasoned, though, and you'll have to season them yourself.) Either way, cast iron options aren't dishwasher safe and shouldn't be cleaned with harsh soap. They're also reactive, which means they could be damaged by prolonged use of acidic ingredients like wine or tomato sauce. However, contrary to belief, they can handle such ingredients for short periods of time while the steaks cook. Some cast iron options come with ridges to replicate a grill surface -- but since the handles are often attached to the skilletets and are made of iron, they can become dangerously hot, so you'll need an accompanying handle cover or a durable oven mitt.Stainless Steel Not only are most pans made from stainless steel safe to put into the dishwasher, but they're usually non-reactive and can handle acidic ingredients. Some models are also designed with metal cores made from either aluminum, which helps them conduct heat more evenly. These typically aren't nonstick right out of the package, so you might have to add some oil before cooking. While you can use standard nonstick Teflon pans to cook steak, the high temperatures needed for a great sear also run the risk of breaking down the artificial nonstick coating. So if you want to play it safe, you might want to avoid nonstick pans. Whether you're more focused on searing or seasoning, the best pans for cooking steak will still deliver a delicious meal. Keep scrolling to check out my top picks.1The Best Cast Iron Pan For SteakLodge Pre-Seasoned Cast Iron SkilletAmazoncast ironIf you're looking for a classic cast iron pan that'll give your steak an all-over sear, this one is a great choice. It's pre-seasoned with 100% vegetable oil and offers a thick, flat surface that lets your meat bask in sauces while it cooks (as compared to the cast iron pan with ridges below, which allows the fat to fall into the grooves while your steak heats up). What's also great about this cast iron pan is that it's offered in more than a dozen sizes, so you can opt for this 13.25-inch option for the family or an 8-inch pan for a solo meal. It can also be used over the campfire, which is convenient for wilderness lovers.What reviewers write: "I have fallen in love with cast iron, because of this skillet. I have several food allergies, so I eat a lot of meat, and the steaks I've made on this skillet rival anything in a restaurant."2A Cast Iron Pan That Replicates The GrillLodge Cast Iron Grill PanAmazonNot only does this 10.5-inch cast iron pan arrive pre-seasoned, but the heavy-duty construction is safe to use on a variety of cooking surfaces (it can also be used over campfires). This one features raised ridges that simulate the bars on a grill, allowing your meat to sear without cooking with too much fat. And thanks to its generous size, it can accommodate "two decent size steaks," according to one reviewer. You can buy the pan on its own or opt for a package that also comes with a handle holder to keep your hands protected.What reviewers write: "Excellent pan for obtaining a high-heat grill-like sear. Perfect for burgers and steaks and other indoor grilling. I find this pan easy to clean in under a minute with just water and a good scrubbing brush."3The Best Stainless Steel Pan For SteakCuisinart MultiClad Pro Stainless Steel SkilletAmazonWith more than 3,500 positive four- and five-star reviews, it's clear that Amazon shoppers adore this 10-inch stainless steel pan. The triple-ply construction features an aluminum core that ensures quick, relatively even heat distribution -- and the polished stainless steel surface won't be altered from acidic ingredients -- even long-term exposure. It doesn't come nonstick, though, so you'll have to add oil before using it. While this pan is more expensive than the other ones on this list, it might be worth it with features like stay-cool handles that are riveted to the side and being dishwasher-safe.What reviewers write: "I could not be more pleased with the performance of this pan. Cooked everything from steak to spaghetti sauce in and it heated up evenly with no hot spots. I needed this pan to fill out my set and they look nice from my hanging rack."4A Set Of 2 Stainless Steel Pans For \$50Calphalon Stainless Steel Frying PansAmazonEach one of these stainless steel pans has an aluminum base for quick and even heating, along with sloped edges that also make them ideal for frying and sautéing. Unlike the previous option, there's no mention of a metal core in either pan.) These aren't nonstick -- but since you can get two of them for \$50 (one 8-inch and one 10-inch), you'll be saving money in the long run. Plus, the ergonomic handles are long enough to stay relatively cool when the pan's hot. It's also safe to put in the dishwasher, which is a bonus.What reviewers write: "Made rib eye steak first time use and turned out beautifully. Fried for few minutes on stove and finished in oven."

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