

GRILLING THE PERFECT STEAK

By R.C. Stone



With spring finally here and summer fast approaching, it's time to think ahead to the grilling season! Grilling a perfectly done steak on an outdoor gas grill can seem like a daunting task... but it doesn't have to be. Steak thickness, preparation, knowing the correct temperature and cooking time, and proper resting, can make cooking a deliciously grilled steak simple.

A 1-2" thick steak works great on the grill. Don't be afraid of a thicker cut. With the correct timing, it can be cooked perfectly.

The preparation stage of grilling a steak is just as important as the grilling itself. Take the steak out of the refrigerator about 30 minutes before you plan to grill it. This allows the steak to reach room temperature before heat is applied. Cooking a steak on the grill is a fast cooking process. To achieve the desired result, the steak needs to cook quickly and evenly. If a steak is grilled right from the fridge, it is extremely difficult to get even cooking at a high temperature which results in an overdone exterior and an underdone interior.

Seasoning the steak is also an important part of the preparation process. Although you can season the meat long before you plan to cook it, the easiest way to season is to do it right before grilling. Once the steak has been out of the fridge 30 minutes, pat it dry, then generally apply salt and pepper (the coarse kind of both is the best), pressing it into the steak with your hands. And don't forget to apply salt and pepper to that 1-2" edge. A little garlic and onion powder are a great addition to salt and pepper to add a little more flavor without masking the natural flavor of the meat. Of course, if you have a favorite seasoning mix, that can be used as well.

Another important element in preparation is to make sure the grill is preheated. Depending on your grill, this can take about ten to twenty minutes. It's important to know your individual grill's preheat time because the steak should go on as soon as the grill is up to a high heat. This is where it gets a little tricky. Every grill has its own idea of high heat. Most backyard grills heat to 500-700°.

There will be a temperature reduction just before grilling for a medium well or well done steak.

For a medium rare steak, the grill can be pre-heated to about 500°. It's important to stay at the grill while grilling in order to time the steak correctly. There will be lots of turns and flips during this process. Think of the ratio 1:1. That's the timing for a medium rare steak. In other words, if the steak is 1" thick, 1 minute per turn or flip is the correct time. If the steak is 1½" thick, 1½ minutes per turn or flip, etc.

Remember to wait the correct increment of time between each of the following steps:

- **Place the steak on the grill**
- **Turn 45° (do not flip over)**
- **Flip over**
- **Turn 45°**

Make sure to leave the lid closed during the actual grilling process. The purpose of turning the steak during grilling is to achieve those beautiful restaurant quality crossed grill marks.

For a medium well or well done steak, place the steak on the grill and then turn the heat down to medium high. Take the formula from above and double it. A 1" steak grills 2 minutes before a turn or flip, and so on. This will cook the steak evenly while still keeping it juicy and tender.

Lastly, remember to let your steak rest. During the resting process, the natural juices redistribute throughout the meat. After removing from the grill, just leave it on a plate or cutting board for five to ten minutes. You can loosely tent it with foil to keep warm, but don't wrap it tightly as it will continue to cook.

Because all grills have their own personality, you may have to tweak the formula a bit to get your perfectly cooked steak. But if you start with a solid plan, you can achieve a perfectly cooked steak done to your specifications with these easy to follow step-by-step instructions.

