



Cooking Guide

The truth is that we have to eat to live! Given that, we think that people should learn about food, learn how to eat well, and enjoy the wonderful adventures of the culinary world.

Cooking is finally gaining recognition in this country. It is a creative process, an art form, and a way for us to express ourselves. The key to tapping into your own individual creativity is not to master recipes. It is to master "techniques".

Over the years, in our newsletter, we have explored some of those techniques. We have taken the time here to compile all of that information. Realize, though, that these notes are just a starting point. The rest is up to you. It takes thought and lots of practice.

We provide the very finest in meats and ingredients on a consistent basis at the lowest possible prices. We can also offer expert advice whenever it is needed. Call us or e-mail us anytime. There is also lots of information on our website at www.iowameatfarms.com. We are always here and we want all of you to ENJOY!

Now Watch This!

We were at a cooking class when someone asked the chef how he could tell when something was done. He said that he cooked by "sight and smell". It made us stop and think, and we realized that when you do a lot of cooking, like we do, everything becomes instinctive.

The problem is that we can't go around telling our customers to take the steak off when it "looks" done. So, we have taken the time to put together "timelines" for grilling.

These are all calculated to a "medium-hot" fire. Although they are not "exact", they will give you a great starting point. We recommend the use of a good, professional testing thermometer as an added tool. Rest assured that, with practice, all of this will become instinctive. ENJOY!

Steaks and Burgers:

Total cooking time is 12 minutes per inch. Our burger patties are 3/4 inch thick, so that translates to 4 1/2 minutes per side. Our 1 1/4 inch steaks are 7 1/2 minutes per side. On thicker cuts, such as baseball tops or filets, calculate the time, but treat them as a "four-sided" steak. One of the "sight" tricks is after a steak has been turned. When it is at the "rare" state, blood will begin to rise and sit on top of the meat. That's when we pull ours off. (A complete guide to the different types of steaks is on our website!)

Fish:

10 minutes per inch. This is one rule that is golden. A 1-inch swordfish steak will cook in 5 minutes per side. The same rule will apply to shellfish. Measure the thickest part and calculate the time. Always oil the fish before grilling. That will help the seasonings adhere and will prevent sticking.

Sausages:

The most foolproof way of doing sausages is to pre-cook them by simmering slowly in water or beer for 5-10 minutes. That tenderizes the casing, renders out a lot of the fat, and completely cooks them. Then you just brown them on the grill. If you don't want to pre-cook, do them on the edge of the fire or on a covered grill. Figure 25-30 minutes and watch for flaring.

Lamb Chops:

Follow the directions for beef steaks. One important thing is that lamb fat is extremely flammable! Watch for flaring.

Pork Chops:

Modern pork is safe at 140 degrees. Most people, though, still want it "well-done". The guideline for that is 14 minutes per inch. The exception to the rule is pork tenderloins. They are extremely lean and will dry out if overcooked. Use the 12 minute per inch rule and cook to medium-rare.

Cattlemen's Cut & Tri-Tips:

These can be done on an open grill. Use a medium fire, turn often, and figure 25-35 minutes. The preferred method is to use a **COVERED GRILL** as follows:

CHARCOAL: Cook with all the vents open! Directly, start with a medium-hot fire and cook for ten minutes on the first side, fifteen on the second. Indirectly, start with a hot fire, cook fifteen minutes per side. (For decorative marking, turn the steak 1/4 turn halfway through the process on each side.)

GAS GRILLS: Pre-heat your grill on "high". Put the steak on and turn the heat down to low. Cook fifteen minutes per side. (For decorative marking, turn the steak a quarter turn half way through the process on each side!) That's all there is to it. You can check the steak using a good testing thermometer. Cook to 125-130 degrees. Let the steak rest for five minutes before you ENJOY!

Ribs

Over the years, over the counter, no item has been more discussed than "ribs". In fact, those "discussions" often turned to controversy. See, everyone seems to think that "their" method is the only method. The fact is that there are three ways to attain the very same goal. Getting there is a lot easier if you understand exactly WHAT you are doing and WHY you are doing it. Our starting point, then, is to look at the process scientifically.

"Meat" is composed of two different tissues. They are "muscle" and "connective". The muscle becomes tender at 140 degrees and begins to toughen and dry at 170. Connective tissue is "collagen", and it breaks down to form gelatin, creating richness and flavor. The problem is that it does not do this until it reaches the boiling point of water, 212 degrees.

In order to keep the muscle from drying out and give the connective tissue a chance to break down, we introduce moisture! The rule is: RIBS NEED MOIST HEAT TO BE TENDER AND JUICY!

Each of the three methods has its own merit. We will discuss each of them, and you can make your own decision. All of these apply to any type of rib. The times that are given are for PORK ribs. If you are doing beef shortribs or prime rib bones, increase those times by 50%.

These times are just guidelines. Whenever you are cooking something that is inherently tough, the instructions are to "cook until tender". Ribs, though, have a built in indicator. As they cook, the meat starts to shrink away from the bones. When you see the tips of the bone begin to appear, they are ready.

Once we have covered the whole cooking process, we will discuss sauces and seasonings. Is all this too much trouble? Doing something really well always gives its own reward, but, in this case, you get to take that reward to the table and share it with family and friends!

True Barbecue

This is for the purist. It is "Texas" style BBQ. It is traditionally done over a slow, open fire for a long, long time. To keep the fire low, it is doused with water. The ribs are basted, or "mopped", frequently. These two actions introduce moisture to the process. Bursts of steam from the fire enable the connective tissue to break down.

This can also be accomplished in a covered gas or charcoal grill or a "smoker". In any case, the process and the science are still the same. Low heat and lots of time. How much time depends on how much heat you use. The longer and slower you cook the ribs, the more smoke flavor they will absorb. You need to experiment with this and find the right formula for your own tastes.

Whether you are using an open fire, gas, charcoal, or smoker, there is one rule that you have to follow. **When cooking over low heat, remember that the ribs must be kept above 212 degrees for a sustained period of time in order for the connective tissue to break down!**

Boiling

This is the first of the "shortcut" methods. As unorthodox as it may seem, it is the method that a lot of restaurants use. All you do is boil, or simmer, the ribs until they are tender.

Bring the water to a boil, drop in the ribs, return to a boil, and cook for about fifteen minutes. Turn them down to a simmer and cook until they are tender.

This method makes the most sense if you are cooking for a large group like a restaurant does. They can be done way ahead of time and finished off on the grill in a matter of minutes. It also has the advantage of removing some of the excess fat.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

The one argument against it is that you are boiling the flavor out of the meat. You can overcome that by flavoring the liquid with celery, onion, carrot, garlic, apple, lemon, etc. The broth can then be used for other purposes, such as boiling fresh corn.

From this point, you are going to "finish" them on the grill. You can do this quickly over a hot fire, or you can go the low and slow route. That's something you will have to play with.

The ribs are fully cooked, so what you are doing is coloring them and adding flavor. You will also be adding your sauce, but we will discuss that later.

Steaming

This second shortcut method can be accomplished several ways. In any case, it involves cooking the ribs in a tightly contained atmosphere in which moisture has been introduced.

The simplest way to do this, and the way that we do them, is to **place the ribs in a roasting pan, add a small amount of liquid, cover tightly, and cook in a 350 degree oven for one hour. If you aren't in a hurry, drop the temp to 300 and give them two hours . (Slower is better!)**

We find this simpler and cleaner than boiling, and the ribs will come out fully cooked and tender. They can be finished off in the oven or on the grill. The only disadvantage is that you may not want to crank up the oven on a hot day.

You can accomplish the same thing outdoors by using a covered grill as your "oven". Regulate the heat and follow the directions above. Or, you can simply **wrap the ribs in several thicknesses of foil and place in the covered grill or on an open fire. Make sure that no steam is escaping and turn frequently to avoid scorching.**

Times will vary according to the level of heat. Just remember to add some liquid to the ribs before you wrap them.

Rib Summary

Those are the three basic methods of doing ribs. There are probably an infinite number of ways to combine them. You just need to experiment and pick your own favorite way. Remember that the more you learn about cooking, the more you will enjoy it, and the more you will be able to share it with family and friends.

There are a couple of more things that we need to discuss before we wrap this up. They concern sauces, seasonings, and liquids.

MOPPING SAUCES: If you are following the "true" BBQ method, you use a basting, or "mopping", sauce. These introduce flavor and the critical moisture for the process. They can be anything from beer to coffee to a vinegar-based sauce. There are plenty of recipes for these, and there are ready to use sauces available. "Johnny D's" is very popular and very good.

DIPPING SAUCES: These are the traditional "barbecue" sauces. They are usually tomato based with lots of sugar and are designed to be used after the ribs are cooked. You can "glaze" the ribs with them during the last ten minutes or so of cooking. Just remember that the sugar in the sauce will burn, so use sparingly and carefully.

RUBS: Considered mandatory for true BBQ, these are simply dry herbs and spices. There are literally dozens and dozens of them available. Experimentation is, again, the key. Find one that you like or stick to salt and pepper. We use "Iowa Meat Farms All Purpose Seasoning Salt", "Siesel's Seasoning", or "Bad Byron's Butt Rub".

LIQUID: In the boiling or steaming methods, you can use water, beer, coffee, broth, or any combination that you like. When they are available during the Spring and early Summer, we like to use Sweet Imperial Onions when we steam our ribs. They add a subtle flavor and have a high moisture content. You don't need any extra liquid. You can use any onion in the off season, but you will need to add a bit of moisture.

THAT is the rib story! We have concluded, and are firmly convinced, that the best way to cook ribs is
YOUR WAY! ENJOY!

Owed to the Perfect Roast!

You have selected your roast from Iowa Meat Farms or Siesel's Meats and taken it home. Congratulations, you now own the very finest beef available anywhere in the world. Now what are you going to do with it?

Rib roasts, crossribs, top loins, and top sirloins, all require "dry oven roasting". The simplest way to accomplish this is to pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees and cook the roast uncovered.

How long-you are going to cook it depends not on the weight of the roast, but on the diameter. Think in terms of how long it will take the heat to penetrate to the center of the roast, and you will get the concept.

The other determining factor is your own oven. If we all had commercial ovens, we could give you pretty precise times. Unfortunately, very few home ovens will achieve and hold exact temperatures. So, the best weapons you have in your arsenal are a good working knowledge of your oven and a good, professional testing thermometer.

We offer these thermometers for sale. They are not expensive, and, if you follow the instructions, they will last a lifetime. It is a sound investment. If you save one roast, it will have paid for itself.

Now, we have selected the 350 degree method because we think that it is pretty foolproof. There are lots of recipes out there that call for slow cooking at anywhere from 250-325. Even professionals recommend this method. It is said that slower cooking results in less shrinkage and a juicier roast. It works particularly well on larger pieces.

We have two problems with that. As we said, the typical home oven will not hold temperatures very well. Secondly, low heat will not produce the browned crust that is so important for flavor.

If you want to try it, we suggest that you practice first, See exactly what your oven will do. Also, either brown the roast on top of the stove or start it in a hot (450) oven and then reduce the heat. You want that nice caramelization on the outside of the roast.

Again, because of the variance in ovens and the diameters of roasts, we can't give you precise cooking times. The following will at least provide some guidelines. Follow the rib count or the weight.

- 3-rib, 6# 2 hours**
- 4-rib, 8# 2 hours, 15 minutes**
- 5-rib, 10# 2 hours, 30 minutes**
- 6-rib, 12# 2 hours, 45 minutes**
- 7-rib, 14+# 3 hours**

With your thermometer, check the roast fifteen minutes before the recommended time. Cook to 120 for rare, 125 for medium-rare, and 130 for medium. Allow the roast to rest for ten minutes before carving. During that time the roast will re-absorb its juices. If you carve too soon, all those juices will flow right out of the roast.

Probably the toughest thing to do in entertaining is to time the roast so that everything is ready at the same time. This is a old catering trick. If your oven will maintain at 140 degrees, you can safely "hold" the roast. Cook it, allow it to rest, then return it to the oven. It will not cook any further, and 140 is a "safe" temperature.

One final trick, if you want varying degrees of "doneness", start the roast in a hot (450) oven for 15-20 minutes, then turn the thermostat down to 350. This will accelerate the cooking, and the ends will be more well-done than the center.

If you are cooking on a covered grill, all of these rules apply. The only difference is that a grill, either charcoal or gas, acts as a convection oven. Roasts will cook faster, so check frequently.

RELAX & ENJOY