

COOKING

FIVE ROUTES, ONE DESTINATION.

Pan, charcoal, reverse sear, sous vide and 800 °C infrared all lead to a good steak – they differ in control, effort and in how evenly the core looks at the end. Here is when each method is the right one.

METHOD	IDEAL FOR	CRUST	CONTROL	TIME
Cast-iron pan	cuts 2–4 cm thick	very good	medium	10–14 min
Charcoal grill	all cuts, especially bone-in	outstanding	medium	15–30 min
Reverse sear	from 4 cm, tomahawk, porterhouse	very good	high	45–90 min
Sous vide	even core, preparation ahead	needs a separate step	very high	1–3 h
800 °C infrared grill	thin to medium cuts	maximum	low	4–8 min

METHOD 1 — THE PAN

The most reliable method for steaks between two and four centimetres. You need a pan that stores heat: cast iron or a heavy stainless steel base. Non-stick pans cannot take the necessary temperature and should not be used for steak.

1. **Dry it.** Pat the steak all over with kitchen paper. Moisture prevents browning.
2. **Salt it.** Coarse salt immediately before cooking – or at least 40 minutes before.
3. **Heat the pan.** Two to three minutes on the highest setting, until a drop of water evaporates instantly with a hiss. Only then add oil with a high smoke point: peanut, rapeseed or sunflower.
4. **Sear.** 90 to 120 seconds per side, without moving it. Then stand the fat edge on the base of the pan with tongs and render it.
5. **Baste.** Reduce the heat, add a knob of butter, a crushed garlic clove and a sprig of thyme. Spoon the foaming butter over the steak for a minute.
6. **Measure.** Take it out at 51 °C for medium rare (allowing for carry-over).
7. **Rest.** Four to six minutes on a rack, then pepper it and serve.

Why pepper only after cooking: pepper burns above 180 °C and turns bitter. If you want to season the crust, use freshly crushed pepper after resting.

METHOD 2 — THE CHARCOAL GRILL

Charcoal delivers radiant heat and smoke aromas that no pan can produce. The decisive factor is zoning: pile the glowing coals onto one half of the grill only. That gives you a direct zone of 300 °C and above and an indirect zone at 150 to 180 °C.

- **Thin cuts** (skirt, hanger, bavette, flank): direct heat only, two to three minutes per side.
- **Medium cuts** (ribeye, striploin): sear directly, then bring up to core temperature in the indirect zone.
- **Thick cuts** (tomahawk, côte de bœuf, whole picanha): reverse the order, see reverse sear.

The classic diamond pattern comes from laying the meat down twice with a 90-degree turn. It looks good but costs crust: where the bars do not touch, less Maillard reaction takes place. For maximum crust, use a cast-iron griddle plate instead of the grate.

METHOD 3 — REVERSE SEAR

With thick pieces the classic method has a problem: by the time the core is warm, the outer layer is already badly overcooked. Reverse sear turns the order around.

1. Warm the steak slowly in the oven or in the indirect grill zone at 100 to 120 °C until the core reaches 48 to 50 °C – 30 to 60 minutes depending on thickness.
2. Take it out and pat the surface dry.
3. Sear hard for 45 to 60 seconds per side in a scorching pan or over direct embers.
4. Rest briefly and serve.

Advantages: the core is evenly pink from edge to edge instead of having a grey transition ring. Because the surface dries out in the oven, the crust turns out even better than with the classic method. And the timing is relaxed and easy to plan.

Disadvantage: the duration. Below three centimetres it is not worth the effort.

METHOD 4 — SOUS VIDE

The steak is vacuum-sealed and brought to exactly the target temperature in a water bath. Because the water never gets hotter than the desired temperature, nothing can overcook.

- **Medium rare:** 54 °C, 1 to 2 hours
- **Medium:** 57 °C, 1 to 2 hours
- **Thick cuts over 5 cm:** up to 3 hours
- **Short ribs:** 65 °C, 24 to 48 hours – the alternative to braising

After the water bath the steak is cooked, but grey. It *must* then be seared hard: pat dry, very hot pan, 45 seconds per side. Skip that step and you get boiled meat.

Sous vide shows its strength when you have guests: ten steaks reach the same point at the same time, and the searing takes only two minutes at the end.

METHOD 5 — THE INFRARED GRILL

Devices that reach 800 °C with gas burners from above became popular in steakhouses and are now available for home use too. The advantage: at this radiant heat, a crust forms in 60 to 90 seconds that would take a pan several minutes – while the core stays almost untouched.

The drawback is the narrow margin. Twenty seconds too long and the crust is burnt. For thick cuts, the infrared grill is therefore also combined with a pre-cooking phase.

THE TEN MOST COMMON MISTAKES

1. **Meat that is too thin.** Below two centimetres a pink core is hard to hold.
2. **A wet surface.** No dry meat, no crust.
3. **A pan that is too cold.** Wait until it hisses loudly as the meat goes in.
4. **An overcrowded pan.** Several steaks cool the pan down and the meat steams.
5. **Constant turning during the sear.** Only turn once the steak releases from the base.
6. **Piercing it with a fork.** Use tongs or a spatula.
7. **Pepper before cooking.** It burns and turns bitter.
8. **Butter too early.** Butter burns at 150 °C; it goes in after the sear.
9. **No resting time.** The juice ends up on the board instead of in the meat.
10. **Slicing with the grain.** With flank, bavette, skirt and picanha this is the decisive step.

BASIC EQUIPMENT

A heavy cast-iron pan, sturdy tongs, a probe thermometer and a sharp, long slicing knife. Nothing more is needed. You can save yourself meat mallets, marinade injectors and steak presses.