

June 6, 2010

## Grilled Steaks with Roquefort Butter

*Have you been looking for the perfect occasion to show off your best Cabernet Sauvignon or classified red Bordeaux? A grilled steak topped with Roquefort butter is the ultimate main course for Cabernet-based wines for two reasons: the wine's tannins magnificently cut the fat marbled throughout the steak, and the flavors are an ideal match. Roquefort cheese steers you toward France and Bordeaux, but any Cabernet will be great. Serve with a tender rib-eye or strip steak and fried or mashed potatoes, plus a salad of sliced tomatoes and red onions.*

In a small food processor, combine the cheese, butter, cognac and pepper. Process to combine thoroughly. Remove the butter mixture from the processor, shape into a log and wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate until ready to use. Bring to room temperature before serving.

Transfer the grilled steaks to warmed individual plates. Cut the Roquefort butter into 4 equal pieces and place a piece on each steak. Serve immediately. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Lifestyles Series, *Food & Wine Pairing*, by Joyce Goldstein (Time-Life Books, 1999).

## Grilled Marinated Skirt Steak

*This skirt steak is enlivened with a marinade that includes piment d'espelette, a ground spice made from red peppers grown around the village of Espelette, in the heart of France's Basque country.*

In a small bowl, stir together the salt, piment d'espelette and black pepper. Rub the mixture on both sides of the skirt steak.

In a large nonreactive bowl, whisk together the orange juice, sherry, brown sugar, olive oil, garlic and red pepper flakes. Add the steak to the marinade, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 4 hours.

Prepare a hot fire in a grill. Or preheat an indoor electric grill on high heat according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Remove the steak from the marinade and pat dry with paper towels. Grill the steak for 3 to 4 minutes per side for medium-rare, or until done to your liking.

Transfer the steak to a carving board, cover loosely with aluminum foil and let rest for 5 minutes. Cut the steak against the grain into thin slices and arrange on a warmed platter. Serves 2 to 3.

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### Ingredients for Grilled Steaks with Roquefort Butter

2 oz. Roquefort, Gorgonzola or other blue-veined cheese

4 Tbs. (½ stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

½ Tbs. cognac (optional)

½ tsp. freshly ground pepper

4 well-marbled rib-eye, porterhouse or New York strip steaks, each 8 to 10 oz. and 1 inch thick, grilled

### Ingredients for Grilled Marinated Skirt Steak

1 Tbs. salt

1 Tbs. piment d'espelette

1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

1 lb. skirt steak, trimmed of excess fat

½ cup fresh orange juice

½ cup dry sherry

3 Tbs. firmly packed light brown sugar

2 Tbs. olive oil

2 garlic cloves, minced

¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

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## Preparing Steak for the Grill

Before grilling the steaks, trim off most of the external fat and discard it; otherwise, the fat can cause flare-ups as it melts and drips into the fire.

One of the keys to successful grilling is to season steaks with salt, pepper, herbs and spices before putting the meat on the grill. This is contrary to the old thinking that salting before cooking draws out juices and produces dried-out meat. These seasonings not only contribute flavor but also form a savory caramelized crust that keeps the steaks juicy and tender.

## General Steak and Grilling Tips

- Season steaks just before cooking.
- Shake off excess marinade from the meat before grilling.
- Never cook steaks while still frozen; always thaw the meat completely and let it come to room temperature before cooking.
- Clean the grill grates before each use with a brush designed for this purpose. Oil the grill rack to help prevent the steaks from sticking.
- Most steaks can be grilled directly over medium-high to high heat, although you should follow the specific directions in your recipe.
- Turn the steaks with tongs, rather than with a fork, to avoid piercing the meat and allowing the flavorful juices to escape.
- If flare-ups occur, move the steaks to a cooler part of the grill or reduce the heat. Avoid dousing the fire with water from a spray bottle as this can cause steam.
- Let the steaks rest (preferably on a warm platter or plate, covered loosely with foil) for a few minutes before serving.

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# Technique Class: STEAK!

*“The only time to eat diet food is while you’re waiting for the steak to cook.”*  
— Julia Child

## About Steak

The USDA has set certain standards for beef in this country, where it is graded based on three factors: the proportion of meat to bone, the proportion of fat to lean meat and the overall quality. The fat that is layered throughout the lean meat (often called intramuscular fat) produces the effect called marbling. It's what keeps steaks juicy and moist during cooking and produces a high-quality flavor. The grading classifications are *Prime*, *Choice*, *Select*, *Standard* and *Commercial*.

## Popular Cuts of Steak

Some cuts of meat are leaner than others, while some are delicately marbled and thicker, so it is important to consider how you plan to prepare the steak. While well-marbled cuts such as tenderloin and rib-eye are delicious grilled and served with little accompaniment, some leaner steaks also have excellent flavor and can be enjoyed marinated, sliced and served as fajitas or on top of salads.

### The Tenderloin (Filet Mignon, Tournedos and Chateaubriand)

The tenderloin is the most tender cut of beef from the cow. It can be roasted whole or, depending on how the tenderloin is cut, can be purchased as filet mignon steaks (from the narrow tail end of the tenderloin), tournedos steaks (from closer to the head section of the tenderloin) and chateaubriand (from the head of the tenderloin; this cut is usually cooked in one large piece that will serve two people).

### Rib Steak (Rib-Eye)

Rib steaks are cut from the rib meat between the ribs. You can buy it with the bone still attached or without the bone, commonly known as rib-eye steaks. Rib steaks are prized for their marbling and juicy flavor.

### Sirloin (Strip Loin Steak)

The sirloin is from the section between the ribs and the top round. The strip loin is boneless, and boneless sirloin steaks are cut from the strip loin. Sirloin steaks have a firm texture and lots of flavor.

*Continued on inside page*

## *Choosing Steaks*

- Purchase from a reputable butcher who is knowledgeable about where the meat being sold comes from.

- Choose deep red, firm-textured meat with a covering of creamy yellow fat.

- Prime steaks such as filet, rib-eye and T-bone should be well marbled, which means the meat has visible specks of fat.

- If buying prepackaged steaks, read the label carefully. Look for the USDA stamp indicating Prime, Choice, Select, Standard and Commercial grades.

- Avoid buying frozen steaks, as freezing can affect both the texture and the taste of the meat.

- Pass over pale meat with white fat, which means the steak has been aged for a minimal amount of time.

- Look for steaks with a thin layer of fat on top and a thin layer of fat on the sides. The fat should be yellow and firm.

### Ingredients for Béarnaise Sauce

½ cup white wine vinegar

2 Tbs. minced shallot

2 tsp. plus 1 Tbs. chopped fresh tarragon

2 Tbs. water

4 egg yolks

1 cup clarified butter, warmed

½ tsp. fresh lemon juice, plus more, to taste

Salt and freshly ground white pepper, to taste

### Strip Steak (T-Bone Steak, Porterhouse Steak)

These steaks all come from the short loin area. The strip steak is also known as top loin steak, club steak, shell steak, New York strip, Kansas City strip, ambassador steak and hotel steak. It is popular because of its full flavor and good balance of fat and lean meat. The T-bone contains a small amount of filet plus some strip, while the porterhouse has a bigger piece of filet and strip.

### Butcher's Steaks (Flank, Flat Iron, Hanger, Skirt)

Restaurant chefs and home cooks alike are discovering butcher’s steaks, so-named because, for generations, the men behind the meat counter kept these delicious cuts for themselves. This category includes flank, flat iron, hanger and skirt. Distinguished by a rich, beefy flavor, the steaks are ideal for strong marinades and spicy rubs, and are typically grilled or broiled. For the best taste and texture, cook them no more than medium-rare, then slice them thinly across the grain.

**Flank:** A long, thin, fibrous cut from the steer’s underbelly, the flank steak is relatively lean.

**Flat Iron:** Cut from the chuck, just above the shoulder blade, the flat iron steak has a small, thin line of gristle running lengthwise through the meat, which should be cut out before or after cooking.

**Hanger:** Part of the diaphragm muscle that hangs between the loin and ribs, this well-marbled steak is also called the hanging tenderloin. It is popular in France, where it is known as *onglet*.

**Skirt:** A long, flat steak with a fibrous grain, the skirt steak comes from the underbelly of the steer. This cut is well marbled with fat.

## Béarnaise Sauce

*One of the classic French sauces, béarnaise is traditionally served with beef. It is also excellent drizzled over grilled fish, such as salmon, or paired with vegetables or egg dishes.*

In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the vinegar, shallot and the 2 tsp. tarragon. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and simmer until the vinegar is almost completely evaporated, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool slightly, then strain into a heatproof bowl. Add the water and egg yolks. Set the bowl over but not touching simmering water in a small saucepan and whisk until the mixture is thick and pale yellow, about 3 minutes.

Transfer the mixture to a blender and blend until smooth. Let cool for 1 minute. With the motor running, slowly pour in the clarified butter and blend until incorporated. Add the ½ tsp. lemon juice, or to taste, and the 1 Tbs. tarragon. Season with salt and white pepper and process to combine. Transfer the sauce to a double boiler and keep warm over very low heat until ready to serve. Makes about 2 cups.

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## Grilled Steaks with Herb Butter

*Butter blended with fresh herbs, known as a compound butter, makes a simple but delicious embellishment for grilled rib-eye steaks.*

In a small dish, stir together the butter, chives, rosemary, and a pinch *each* of salt and pepper.

Meanwhile, prepare a hot fire in a grill. Oil the grill rack. Or preheat a broiler.

Season the steaks generously with salt and pepper, patting the seasonings firmly into the meat. Place the steaks on the grill rack, or put them on a baking sheet and place under the broiler. Cook, turning once, 6 to 8 minutes total for medium-rare, or until done to your liking.

Transfer the steaks to individual plates, top with the herb butter and serve immediately. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Food Made Fast Series, *Weeknight*, by Melanie Barnard (Oxmoor House, 2006).

## Grilled and Stuffed Filets Mignons with Pesto and Grilled Tomatoes

*These steaks are stuffed with pesto—you can make it from scratch or use a jarred variety. Instead of pesto, the steaks can be stuffed with prepared tapenade, a Provençal olive-anchovy-caper condiment, or with caponata, a Sicilian sweet-and-sour eggplant relish. A simple baby lettuce salad alongside the filets is all you need to complete the meal.*

Prepare a medium-hot fire in a grill. Oil the grill rack.

Using a small, sharp knife, make a horizontal cut into one side of each steak, forming a pocket almost to the edges of the steak; take care not to cut all the way through. Using a small spoon, stuff 1 Tbs. of the pesto into each pocket. If necessary, secure the pocket with toothpicks. Brush both sides of the steaks and tomato slices with the olive oil, and season with salt and pepper.

Grill the steaks over the hottest part of a charcoal fire or directly over the heat elements of a gas grill, turning once, until nicely charred and cooked to your liking, 5 to 6 minutes per side for medium-rare.

While the steaks are cooking, place the tomatoes at the edges of a charcoal grill where the heat is less intense, or on an area of a gas grill with lower heat. Grill the tomato slices, turning once with a spatula, until just softened and lightly charred, 2 to 4 minutes per side.

Transfer the steaks to individual plates, placing each steak on or next to a tomato slice. Serve immediately. Serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Essentials of Grilling*, by Denis Kelly, Melanie Barnard, Barbara Grunes & Michael McLaughlin (Oxmoor House, 2003).

### Ingredients for Grilled Steaks with Herb Butter

3 Tbs. unsalted butter, at room temperature

2 Tbs. snipped fresh chives

1 Tbs. minced fresh rosemary

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

4 rib-eye steaks, each about 1 inch thick

- Look for steaks with a thin layer of fat on top and a thin layer of fat on the sides. The fat should be yellow and firm.

### Ingredients for Grilled and Stuffed Filets Mignons with Pesto and Grilled Tomatoes

6 filets mignons, each 5 to 6 oz. and about 1½ inches thick

6 Tbs. pesto

6 toothpicks, soaked in water for 10 minutes and drained (optional)

6 slices beefsteak tomato, each about ½ inch thick

2 Tbs. olive oil

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

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