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WILLIAMS-SONOMA

# 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*

## 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.

