

# Preparing and Cooking Beef

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Beef may be divided into two great classes with regard to its preparation for the table: tender beef and tough beef. In general, two factors determine whether a piece of beef is going to be tough or tender; the age of the animal, and the place on the animal from which the cut is taken, or in other words, whether or not it comes from a part of the body where the muscles are used a great deal. For example, cuts from the rib or loin of most any animal will be tender, as these muscles are used very little, while cuts from the round, the shoulder, or from the neck will always be more or less tough.

An excessively high temperature should never be used in the cooking of meats, except to sear steaks and other thin cuts at the beginning of the cooking process. After this type of cut has been seared or browned, then the temperature should be reduced and the meat cooked at a comparatively low temperature. A high temperature shrinks and hardens the connective tissue, the substance which is found in large amounts in the tough meats, while a *low* temperature in the presence of *steam* softens the connective tissue.

Tender meat needs only to be so cooked as to retain and develop the flavor and change the color. The way to attain this is to cook by *dry heat*, that is *without the addition* of any moisture.

Examples of such methods are *broiling* and *roasting*.

Some examples of tender cuts of beef are:

1. Porterhouse steaks
2. Sirloin steaks
3. Rib roasts

## WAYS OF COOKING THE TENDER CUTS

**1. Broiled Steak.**—By broiling is meant cooking by direct heat, no moisture being used, and usually no fat except the fat in the meat. Select a tender steak, such as a porterhouse or sirloin. Steaks should be cut at least one inch thick, and from that to two and one-half. If necessary, wipe the steak with a damp cloth and trim off superfluous

fat. (Do not wash beef nor let it stand in cold water, as the juices will be drawn out.) Use some of the fat to grease the broiler, or skillet if you have no broiler. Broil under a gas flame, or over a bed of coals, or in a hot skillet. Sear each side well and finish cooking more slowly, turning frequently. Be careful not to overcook a steak. It should be slightly pink on the inside when done. For a one-inch steak, broil *eight minutes* for *rare*, and *ten minutes* for *medium done*. Salt when done.

**2. Planked Steak** (a variation of the plain broiled steak above).—The steak should be cut about an inch and one-fourth thick. Broil in a hot broiler about eight minutes, turning four or five times. Set the steak on a hot plank. Pile hot mashed potatoes around the edge of the plank. Put three or four boiled onions on the steak. Brush over the edge of the potatoes and onions with the yolk of an egg, beaten and diluted with milk or water, and set the plank in a hot oven to brown and reheat the potatoes and finish cooking the steak. Remove from the oven, place upon it three or four baked tomatoes hot from the oven, and serve at once.

**3. Beef Roast—Rib.**—The old-time theory that searing a roast keeps in the juices seems to be at fault. A roast cooked at an oven temperature below that at which it browns will lose less than one which is seared. Since, however, the popular idea of a roast is one which is well browned, a comparatively low temperature which still browns may be used. In real roasting use no moisture at all but cook the meat in an open pan by dry heat. This is done by using a tender piece—the rib of beef is best. Wipe the roast well with a damp cloth. Place it in an uncovered pan so that the layer of fat is on top. This allows the fat as it cooks out to drop over the meat. Do not salt the meat until it is ready to serve. Place the roast in an oven regulated at 320° F and cook at that temperature until done. Beef should not be cooked past medium done (slightly pink on the inside). This can be done by roasting the meat at 320° F. allowing 17 minutes per pound. A more accurate way, however, to determine when a piece of meat is done is to insert a thermometer into the center of the piece of meat before it is placed in the oven. If rare meat is desired, remove the roast when the thermometer in the meat registers 50° C. (122° F.); if medium done is desired, remove when the thermometer registers 60° C. (140° F.); and for well done, remove when the thermometer registers 70° C. (158° F.). The thermometer method is more accurate since the time of cooking is influenced by the size, shade and structure of the roast.

Not all the meat of an animal is tender, and if we are buying it, the tender parts are more expensive. The tougher pieces are usually nutritious and well flavored. They are often more juicy than the more tender ones and it is perfectly possible to cook them in such a way as to make them tender and almost as palatable as the more expensive, tender pieces. More care is necessary, however, in preparation in order to retain and develop as much flavor as possible while cooking for tenderness.

Ways of making tough meat tender are: 1. *Long, slow*, cooking *in moisture* (this softens and dissolves the connective tissue, the part which makes the meat tough). 2. Pounding. 3. Grinding. 4. Use of acid (tomatoes or vinegar)

With the exception of the rib and loin cuts, all of the other cuts of the beef are more or less tough, unless the animal is young.

### WAYS OF COOKING THE TOUGH CUTS

1. **Pot Roast.**—For a pot roast it is well to use shoulder, rump or round. A favorite piece of beef for a pot roast is the lower triangular portion of the round, known as Pike's peak. Clean the meat with a damp cloth. Place in a hot kettle or frying pan and *sear well on all sides*. This searing may also be done by placing the meat in an open kettle in a very hot oven for twenty to thirty minutes. If the roast is dipped in flour before searing, the browned flour helps to flavor the gravy. One-third cover with boiling water. (Cold water would soften the crust formed by searing.) Salt, and cover tightly. A "seal top" baster is an excellent container to use, or a fireless cooker kettle. The meat should cook slowly, not allowing the water to boil, for at least *four* hours. Potatoes and other vegetables may be added to the roast in time to cook them. A fireless cooker is an ideal place to cook a pot roast as there is no danger of having too high a temperature, and also fuel is saved. When cooking in the fireless, whole potatoes may be used with the meat. A pot roast may also be cooked on top of the stove or in the oven.

2. **Stew.**—Stew is exactly the same thing as pot roast, except smaller pieces of meat are used. For this purpose it is possible to use meat from the round, neck, plate, flank or any other tough, inexpensive portions. The meat should be cut in uniform cubes about one inch in size. Each piece should then be browned well on all sides. Cover with hot water, salt and let simmer, but not boil, for 2 to 4 hours. At the right length of time before the meat is done add diced vegetables and any seasoning desired. When the vegetables are

tender pour off the liquid and make a gravy of it. Cover the meat and vegetables with the gravy, heat and serve piping hot. To be attractive a stew should not resemble a soup, but should contain plenty of vegetables and meat in proportion to the gravy. The gravy should be thick enough not to run all over the plate.

**3. Swiss Steak.**—Round steak cut one and one-half inches thick makes the best piece to use for a Swiss steak. Pound well, beating in as much flour as possible. The pounding helps make the meat tender and the flour soaks up the juices which would otherwise be lost by the pounding. Season with salt and pepper, and then sear on both sides in a small amount of hot fat. Cover with tomatoes and sliced onion. Cover with a tight fitting lid and cook slowly either in the oven or on top of the stove for 3 to 4 hours. Also the fireless cooker is a splendid place to cook a Swiss steak.

**4. Mock Duck.**—Tough meats are frequently cooked with dressings which, being moist help to make the meat tender, give flavor to the meat and make the meat go farther. We can use a flank steak or a round steak cut one-half inch thick in preparing mock duck. Season with salt and pound well. Cover one side of the meat with a layer of dressing as thick as the meat, then roll up like a jelly roll and tie with a string or fasten with skewers. Roll in flour and sear in hot fat. Place in a covered roaster and partly surround with tomatoes, as in the case of the Swiss steak, or if tomatoes are not used make a brown gravy and use around the meat. Bake slowly for about four hours.

**5. Meat Birds.**—This is very similar to mock duck. Use small pieces of beef cut from the round, about two by four inches in size. They should be about one-half inch thick, as with the mock duck. Pound each piece well and spread with dressing, roll up, fasten with string or toothpicks. Roll each piece in flour and sear. Wrap each piece with a piece of bacon and fasten with a toothpick. Bake slowly in a covered pan from three to four hours. The fat from the bacon will do the basting.

For these dressings any kind of bread may be used, and this is an excellent way of using stale bread. The bread may be broken up, ground up, or, if not too stale, grated. It should then be seasoned well with onion juice or finely minced onion, salt, pepper, sage, parsley, celery seed, etc. A small amount of fat and some liquid are used. Be careful not to get the dressing too wet as it will be soggy. The fat will help to keep it from being pasty although too much will make it too rich. The fat of the meat is preferable, although any other well-flavored fat may be used.