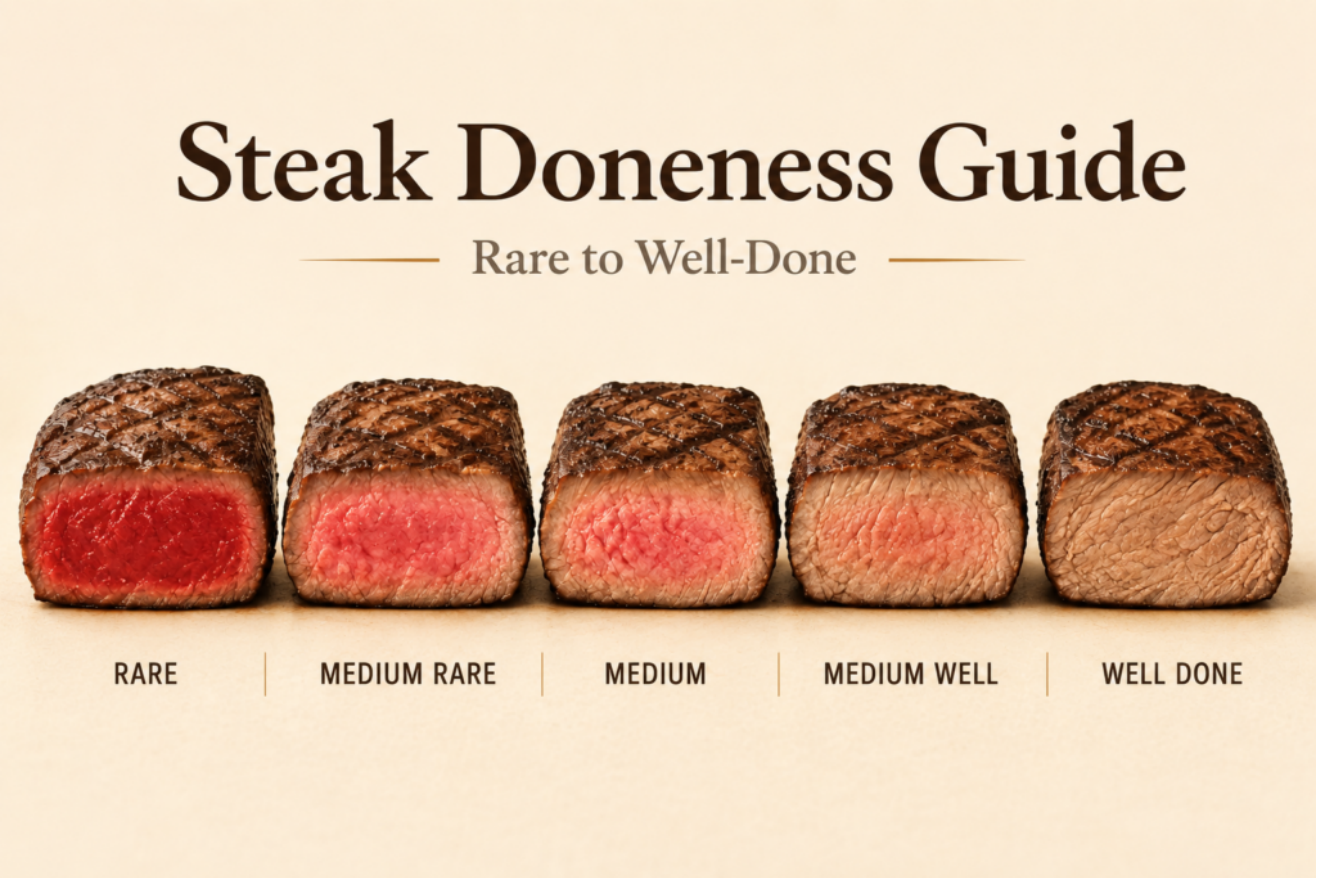
HOME

How to Cook a Steak Perfectly: A Simple Temperature Guide From Rare to Well-Done

By bestfolkmedicine · 29/06/2026 · 6 min read



A great steak does not depend on guessing, pressing it with your finger, or cutting into it every 30 seconds.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(122); });

The real secret is simple: **use an instant-read thermometer**.

The photo in this post is useful for showing the visual difference between rare, medium, and well-done steak—but cooking time alone is never exact. A one-inch sirloin, a thick ribeye, a filet, and a bone-in strip steak will all cook differently depending on thickness, pan heat, starting temperature, and whether you finish in the oven.

That is why the internal temperature matters more than the clock.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(130); });
Here is the practical steak guide every home cook should know.

The First Rule: Temperature Beats Timing

You may see guides claiming a steak needs “two minutes per side” or “five minutes per side.” That can be a rough starting point, but it is not a guarantee.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(131); });
A steak can be thick, thin, chilled, room-temperature, bone-in, marbled, lean, pan-seared, grilled, or oven-finished. All of those factors change cooking time.

The most reliable tool is a meat thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the steak, away from bone and large pockets of fat. USDA guidance says whole cuts of beef should reach **145°F / 63°C**, followed by at least a **3-minute rest**, for the standard consumer food-safety recommendation.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(132); });
For preference-based doneness, many people cook below that temperature. That is a personal choice, but it is important to understand that rare and medium-rare steak fall below the USDA’s standard minimum safety recommendation for whole beef cuts.

Steak Doneness Temperatures: Rare to Well-Done

Use this as your practical thermometer guide.

Blue Rare: 110–115°F / 43–46°C

Blue rare steak is barely cooked in the center. The outside is seared, but the interior stays deep red and cool.

This style is usually best for very high-quality, tender cuts and experienced steak lovers. It is not a common choice for home cooks, and it is below the standard USDA safety recommendation.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(133); });

Rare: 120–125°F / 49–52°C

Rare steak has a warm red center and a lightly seared exterior. It is very tender and juicy, but still quite soft in texture.

Best for: tender cuts such as filet mignon, strip steak, and some ribeye cuts.

Medium Rare: 130–135°F / 54–57°C

Medium rare is often considered the sweet spot for steak lovers. The center is warm and red-pink, the fat has started to soften, and the meat stays juicy.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(134); });
Best for: ribeye, strip steak, porterhouse, T-bone, filet mignon, and sirloin.

Many chefs consider medium rare the ideal doneness for marbled cuts because it gives the fat time to soften without drying out the meat.

Medium: 140–145°F / 60–63°C

Medium steak has a warm pink center with more browning around the edges. It is firmer than medium rare but can still be juicy when cooked carefully.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(135); });
Best for: ribeye, strip steak, sirloin, flank steak, and hanger steak.

The USDA's recommended minimum temperature for whole beef steaks is **145°F / 63°C**, with a rest period of at least three minutes.

Medium Well: 150–155°F / 66–68°C

Medium-well steak has only a small amount of pink in the center. The texture is firmer, and leaner cuts can dry out quickly at this stage.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(136); });

Best for: thicker, well-marbled cuts that can tolerate longer cooking.

Well-Done: 160°F+ / 71°C+

Well-done steak has little to no pink remaining. It is fully browned throughout and significantly firmer.

It can still taste good, especially with a fattier cut, careful basting, or a sauce—but lean steak can become dry if cooked too aggressively.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(137); });

The Best Steak Cuts for Each Doneness

Not every cut should be cooked the same way.

Ribeye: Best around medium rare to medium. Its marbling needs enough heat to render and soften.

Filet mignon: Best rare to medium rare. It is lean and tender, so overcooking can make it less enjoyable.

New York strip: Excellent medium rare to medium.

Sirloin: Usually best medium rare to medium, depending on thickness.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(138); });

Flank steak and skirt steak: Often best around medium rare, then sliced thinly against the grain.

T-bone or porterhouse: Great medium rare to medium because the strip side and filet side cook differently.

How to Pan-Sear a Steak at Home

A cast iron skillet or heavy stainless-steel pan is ideal because it holds heat well.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(139); });

1. Choose a thick steak

A steak around 1 to 1½ inches thick is easier to cook evenly than a very thin steak.

2. Pat it dry

Moisture is the enemy of a good crust. Use paper towels to dry the steak thoroughly before seasoning.

3. Season simply

Salt and black pepper are enough for a great steak. You can add garlic, rosemary, thyme, or butter later, but start with a properly seasoned surface.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(140); });

4. Heat your pan well

Use a heavy skillet over medium-high to high heat. Add a high-smoke-point oil such as avocado oil, refined olive oil, or another suitable cooking oil.

5. Sear without constantly moving it

Place the steak in the pan and let it develop a deep brown crust before flipping. Do not slide it around every few seconds.

For a 1-inch steak, start checking the temperature early rather than relying only on time.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(141); });

6. Add butter and herbs near the end

Lower the heat slightly. Add butter, crushed garlic, thyme, or rosemary. Tilt the pan and spoon the melted butter over the steak for extra flavor.

7. Remove it before it reaches your final target

Steak continues cooking while it rests. This is called carryover cooking.

For example, if you want a medium-rare final temperature of around 135°F, consider removing the steak at about 128–132°F, depending on thickness and cooking method.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(142); });

8. Let it rest

Rest the steak for at least three to five minutes before slicing. For larger steaks, five to ten minutes is often better.

Resting gives the juices time to redistribute and helps prevent them from running straight onto the plate when you cut into it.

Common Steak Mistakes That Ruin the Result

Cooking straight from the refrigerator

You do not need to leave steak out for hours, but taking it out 20–30 minutes before cooking can help it cook more evenly.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(143); });

Using a cold or overcrowded pan

A crowded pan lowers the temperature and creates steam instead of a crust. Cook one or two steaks at a time if needed.

Flipping too early

Let the steak develop color before turning it. A proper crust adds flavor.

Pressing down on the steak

Pressing squeezes juices out. Let the heat do the work.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(144); });

Cutting into it to “check”

This releases juices and still does not tell you the exact internal temperature. A thermometer is more accurate.

Forgetting the rest

The rest period is not optional if you want a juicy steak.

Food Safety Matters

Steak doneness is partly a personal preference, but food safety should always be considered.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(145); });
USDA recommends cooking whole beef steaks, chops, and roasts to at least **145°F / 63°C**, then allowing a **3-minute rest**. Ground beef should reach **160°F / 71°C**, because bacteria can be mixed throughout the meat during grinding.

Never rely on color alone. A steak can look brown before it is safe, or stay pink even after reaching a safe temperature. Use a thermometer for the most accurate result.

Also remember the basics:

- Keep raw meat separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash hands after handling raw steak.
- Clean thermometers before and after use.
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly.

The Bottom Line

The perfect steak is not about memorizing exact minutes per side.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(146); });
It is about learning what you like, choosing the right cut, building a good crust, and using a thermometer so you do not overcook it.

For most steak lovers, medium rare to medium gives the best balance of tenderness, flavor, and juiciness.

But whether you prefer a red center or a well-done steak, the best result comes from one simple habit:

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(147); });

Cook by temperature, not by guesswork.

Read online: https://bestfolkmedicine.com/2026/06/steak-cooking-temperatures-guide/

Downloaded on 21/11/2026

DISCLAIMER: We do not provide medical advice and nothing contained herein shall be construed as medical advice. The contents such as text, comments, graphics, images, videos and other content contained on this site are for informational purposes only. Statements on this website have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration, and are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Always consult your personal physician before starting any fitness or exercise program or changing dietary habits. The content of this site is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. It is not a substitute for a medical exam, nor does it replace the need for services or counsel provided by medical professionals.