

As the author of, *Grill Every Day*, and also of an earlier grilling cookbook, *Dressed to Grill*, which delivered sizzling grill recipes with sass, I am often asked the following question: What is the best way to grill meat and have it deliciously seared without overcooking it? Here is a detailed answer.

Mastering meat on the grill is all about getting a good sear on the outside while keeping the inside juicy, tender, and rare to medium-rare. Different techniques are involved, depending on the cut and thickness. You'll quickly find out that one important technique to master is the two-zone fire, which allows you to sear the meat over high heat and then move it to a cooler zone to finish cooking. If you are a novice and want to start out with the easiest meat to grill, I suggest you try flank steak. It's a sturdy cut that adapts well to different marinades, pastes, and dry rubs. Plus, trimmed properly, flank steak has little fat, so flare-ups are minimized. Here are some other basic guidelines and techniques that will bring you grilling success when meat is on the menu.

First, start with a clean, hot, well-oiled grill surface. You want to get a good sear on the meat, so even small bits of charred food left on the grate will interfere with achieving an even sear with well-etched grill marks. Have the grill preheated, brush the grate so it's clean, clean, clean, and oil the grate thoroughly so it's well coated and slick.

Second, never put a cold piece of meat on the grill. Remove the meat from the refrigerator 20 to 30 minutes prior to grilling. If there is any residual moisture on it, blot it dry with paper towels before marinating or using a dry rub.

Third, use the right tools for turning the meat. For steaks and chops, I always use tongs, never a two-pronged fork, to move or turn the meat, because a fork will pierce it, allowing the juices to run out.

Fourth, the cooking times provided are just guidelines. Your best bet for a juicy rare or medium-rare piece of meat is to use an instant-read thermometer. Remember that the meat will continue to cook after it comes off the grill, rising in temperature from 3 to 6 degrees, so if you want a medium-rare steak, take it off the grill when it tests just below medium-rare, and by the time it rests, it will be perfect. Experimentation and practice will help you get the result you want.

Finally, meat needs to rest when it comes off the grill. During cooking, the heat drives the juices into the cells and into the center of the meat. If you cut meat the moment you take it off the grill, the juices will spill out on the carving board and the meat will be less tender. If you allow the meat to rest for 5 minutes before you cut into it, the juices will redistribute themselves evenly throughout the meat, leaving it juicy and tender when sliced.