SLOW ROASTING: BLOWTORCH PRIME RIB ROAST

Chef Thomas Keller / Chapter Ten

MASTERCLASS

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"A lot of people will look and say, 'That's rare,' or, 'That's too rare for me.' But if you closed your eyes and you tasted it, texturally you'd understand that it is medium rare."

CHAPTER REVIEW

If you like to play with fire and you love red meat, this is the dish for you. The main ingredient is a center-cut rib roast, and a key implement is a propane blowtorch, which you'll use to brown the meat before slow-roasting it. Propane blowtorches are available at most hardware stores and usually cost less than $20; replacement cylinders are usually less than $5. Chef Keller says not to bother with the smaller, butane-fire torches sold at gourmet shops. Propane torches are more effective. (They're also great for caramelizing crème brûlée.)

In this preparation, Chef Keller salts the meat and air-dries it in the refrigerator overnight. He also scores the skin, an optional step that is largely for aesthetics, though Chef Keller says it helps the salt penetrate the meat. Unlike oven-roasting at a high temperature, which results in meat of various degrees of doneness across the cut, slow-roasting produces meat that is evenly cooked from edge to edge. You'll need a meat thermometer to ensure that the roast reaches an internal temperature of 128°F. The pinkness of the meat may lead you to believe that it is undercooked. It's not. It will be beautifully medium-rare and tender, as you'll discover when you take your first bite. Chef Keller prepares this dish with glazed carrots, puréed potatoes, and horseradish cream. Recipes for the carrots and potatoes are included at the end of this chapter.

PREP & COOK TIMELINE

- Bring prime rib to temperature
- Score the skin
- Torch
- Season generously
- Slow roast to 128°
- Let rest (carry over to 132°)
- Carve and serve

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PROTEIN

Mise en place

Ingredients

1 two-bone center-cut rib roast, about 4½ pounds, trimmed of excess fat
Kosher salt
Sel gris, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Equipment

Roasting pan with rack
Paring knife
Propane or butane blowtorch
Eye goggles
Cutting board
Knife

METHOD

Position an oven rack in the lower third of the oven and preheat the oven to 275°F. Put the trussed rib roast on a rack in a roasting pan. If you are choosing to score the skin, cut the fat in 1/16-inch intervals. Hold a blowtorch about an inch from the roast and lightly brown any white fat and red meat that you see on all sides. When you are done torching, the outside of the roast will be nice and browned and look as if it has already gone through the roasting process. Season the roast generously with salt.

Roast the prime rib for about 2 hours or until the roast registers 128°F in the center. Remove from the oven and let rest for at least 30 minutes. The meat will retain heat and continue to cook once out of the oven; make sure the internal temperature is 132°F for the perfect medium-rare.

TO COMPLETE

In the video, Chef Keller uses his hands to transfer the meat to the butcher block because the meat has been resting for half an hour and has cooled. If the meat is too hot for you to transfer with your hands, use a utensil that will not pierce the meat. Carve the roast, cutting away the bones, and slice into individual bones to serve separately. Cut the roast into slices that are about ½-inch thick supporting both the roast and the piece being cut with your hand. Arrange the meat on the platter and sprinkle with sel gris and pepper. To plate and serve as Chef Keller does, follow the additional recipes below.

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ACCOMPANIMENTS

HORSERADISH CREAM

Mise en place

Ingredients

115 grams crème fraîche (or sour cream)
60 grams prepared horseradish
Chives, sliced (for garnish)

Equipment

Whisk
Bowl

METHOD

Combine the crème fraîche and horseradish and whip until you achieve soft peaks. The crème fraîche should be very cold, so you may wish to do this over ice. Top with minced chives.

You can prepare the horseradish cream up to one week in advance and store in the refrigerator; if you do, omit the chives until just before serving.

GLAZED CARROTS

Mise en place

Ingredients

454 grams (1 pound) sweet or fresh garden carrots, peeled, oblique cut
5 grams (approximately 1 teaspoon) room temperature butter
5 grams sugar (to start)
Water (enough to cover carrots)
2 drops white wine vinegar
Small handful parsley, chopped (for garnish)
Kosher salt

Equipment

Cutting board
Chef's knife
Peeler or scrub pad
5-quart saucepot
Serving bowl

METHOD

Add carrots to the pan in a single layer and swirl the pan around to create an even amount of space between them. Add sugar—start with about 5 grams (approximately 1 teaspoon)—and enough water to barely cover carrots. Add butter and turn on the flame to high heat. Move the pan around throughout cooking to keep carrots evenly spaced so that each is individually glazed. Pay attention to aromas and sounds. The sound of the boiling water at the beginning of the process will become more intense. It will turn to a crackle as the water evaporates and the glaze reduces. When reduction is nearly complete, check for doneness. Chef Keller likes root vegetables to have very little resistance to the tooth without being mushy. If the vegetables are still too firm, you may add slightly more water and cook until the desired texture is achieved. Turn down the heat to medium and cook until finished. You're looking for the butter to emulsify and the liquid to form a shiny glaze. Cooking too much will result in oiliness. Cooking too little will leave the liquid milky-looking and watery.

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GLAZED CARROTS *continued*

If you take glazing too far and begin to see slight caramelization on the bottom of the pan or notice the sheen of the glaze disappear from the surface of the carrots, add a little water and two drops of white wine vinegar, and quickly reduce again.

When reduction is complete, toss carrots in the pan with chopped parsley. Plate and sprinkle with a few flakes of finishing salt for a little crunch.

POTATO PURÉE

Mise en place

Ingredients

190 grams cream, hot
225 grams cold butter, cubed
50 grams clarified butter (optional)
750 grams Yukon Gold potatoes
Warm water as needed
Kosher salt
Butter for finishing
Maldon salt for finishing

Equipment

Cutting board
Paring knife
3-quart saucepot
Slotted spoon
Tamis, finest mesh
Parchment
Bowl scraper
4-quart copper core saucepan
Stiff rubber spatula
Serving bowl

METHOD

Place the whole, unpeeled potatoes in a 3-quart saucepot and cover with two inches of cold water. Slowly bring the water to a gentle simmer. The potatoes are cooked whole to prevent them from absorbing the water, and therefore, allowing you to incorporate more butter and cream. Cook the potatoes until they are extremely tender when tested with a paring knife. When ready, turn off the heat. Working one potato at a time, remove from the water, place on the tamis, split the potato in half, and press the flesh through the screen using a stiff bowl scraper, while leaving the skins behind. It is a good idea to place a sheet of parchment paper underneath to collect the passed potato. Once all of the potatoes have been passed, transfer them to a 4-quart saucepan. Warm the saucepan over medium-low heat, use a stiff rubber spatula to incorporate ⅓ of the hot cream into the potatoes, and beat in a few cubes of butter with the rubber spatula until the butter is emulsified into the potatoes. Drizzle in a little clarified butter. Clarified butter adds a more intense butter flavor than whole butter. Keep adding the cream, butter, and clarified butter to develop a creamy purée. If the purée begins to look oily with the fat separating from the potatoes, the emulsion is breaking. To restore the emulsion, you may need to add hot water periodically, just as you would for mayonnaise or hollandaise. Additionally, regulate the heat to allow the butter to be incorporated without losing the emulsion. Once you've achieved your desired texture, season with salt, transfer to a serving bowl, and top with a pad of butter.