PAN ROASTING: CÔTE DE BŒUF

Chef Thomas Keller / Chapter Eight

MASTERCLASS

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"Côte de bœuf is typically for two people. And I love the idea of that celebration and that idea of sharing."

CHAPTER REVIEW

Chef Keller thinks of côte de bœuf, or rib steak, as a celebratory dish, built for sharing. It is composed of the rib bone, the rib eye, and a marbled section called the deckle, which is Chef Keller's favorite. In the United States, a côte de bœuf is called a rib steak. To save yourself some time, ask your butcher for a double-cut rib steak, trimmed, with bone "frenched" or scraped clean.

In this chapter, Chef Keller starts with a rib steak that has been salted and air-dried overnight in the refrigerator to season the meat and remove excess moisture. He trusses the rib steak to hold its shape and sears it in a cast-iron pan before finishing it in the oven. Contrary to popular belief, searing meat does not seal in flavor—but it does create a delicious crust.

The final flourish in this preparation is the addition of maître d'hôtel butter, an herbed compound butter, which Chef Keller melts over the steak just prior to plating. He complements the dish with the big-pot blanched asparagus he taught in his first MasterClass.

PREP & COOK TIMELINE

Day 1

Truss and season rib steak → Make compound butter → Air-dry

Day 2

Bring rib steak to temperature → Sear rib steak → Add aromatics and butter to taste → Finish in oven → Let rest → Slice, plate, top with compound butter, and serve

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PROTEIN

Mise en place

Serves 2 as an entrée or 4 family style or part of a multi-course meal

Ingredients

1 double-cut rib steak, about 2 to 2½ pounds
Kosher salt
French grey sea salt
Canola oil
4 tablespoons unsalted butter
Thyme sprigs
Crushed garlic cloves
3 tablespoons maître d'hôtel butter (recipe below)

Equipment

Slicing knife
Cutting board
Kitchen twine
Baking sheet with rack
12-inch cast-iron skillet
Aluminum foil
Kitchen shears
Kitchen torch

METHOD

To truss the côte de bœuf, tie a piece of kitchen twine around the circumference of the steak, using the bone as the anchor point to hold its shape during cooking. Place on a rack over a baking sheet so that the air can circulate around both sides. Salt both sides and let dry uncovered in the refrigerator 1 day, so that the salt has time to penetrate into the flesh and draw out moisture.

One hour before cooking, remove the meat from the refrigerator and bring to room temperature. If there is any moisture on the meat, pat it dry with a paper towel.

Heat the oven to 450°F and begin heating a cast-iron skillet over high heat. Wrap the bone in aluminum foil to prevent it from burning and season the meat with kosher salt a second time. Add 3/8 inch of canola oil to the pan. When the oil is wafting smoke, add the steak and sear for 4 to 5 minutes, or until dark brown and crusty on the bottom. Flip the steak and brown the second side for 2 to 3 minutes.

Pour off most of the oil and add a small amount of oil to the pan—about 15 grams or 1 tablespoon—to prevent the butter from burning. Then add the cold-cubed butter, thyme, and garlic. Baste the meat with the butter and pan juices for a few minutes then place in the preheated 450°F oven. After 5 minutes, carefully remove the pan from the oven, place it on your cooktop, and baste the meat again with the foaming butter and pan juices for about 1 minute. Then return to the oven for about 10 to 15 minutes, or until a meat thermometer reads 130°F for medium-rare. (Note: The cooking time depends on the temperature of the meat going in and the thickness of the meat.) Transfer the meat to a rack to rest for 10 to 15 minutes before slicing.

PAN ROASTING: CÔTE DE BŒUF

TO SERVE:

Remove the kitchen twine from the steak. Slice off the bone—leaving a bit of meat attached and the deckle. Slice the ribeye against the grain into ¼-inch slices and then continue with the deckle. Overlap the slices on the serving plates and sprinkle with grey salt.

To plate and serve as Chef Keller does, follow the additional recipes for maître d'hôtel butter and blanched asparagus below. To serve the maître d'hôtel butter, place 3 discs on top of the sliced beef and gently warm using a kitchen torch (if desired) until the butter begins to melt.

ACCOMPANIMENTS

MAÎTRE D'HÔTEL BUTTER

Mise en place

Ingredients

100 grams unsalted butter, at room temperature
10 grams chopped Italian parsley
20 grams teaspoons fresh lemon juice
10 grams kosher salt

Equipment

Small bowl
Rubber spatula
Plastic wrap
Bench scraper

METHOD

Put the tempered butter in a small bowl and stir with a spoon or rubber spatula until smooth. Add the remaining ingredients and stir to combine.

Cut a piece of plastic wrap and form the butter into a rough log about 4 inches long, approximately 2 inches from one end of the plastic wrap. Roll up the butter in the plastic to form a compact log about 1¼ inches in diameter, then twist the ends and tie. Let the butter firm up in the fridge before using so that it is easier to slice off discs in the amount you need.

The butter can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days or frozen, well-wrapped, for up to 2 months.

PAN ROASTING: CÔTE DE BŒUF

ACCOMPANIMENTS

BLANCHED ASPARAGUS

Mise en place

Ingredients

1 pound asparagus
Kosher salt

Equipment

Cutting board
Chef's knife
Paring knife
Loaf pan
Parchment for trim
Abrasive green scrub pad
Peeler
Butcher's twine
Kitchen shears
12-quart stockpot
Mesh skimmer
Ice bath

METHOD

To trim, use a paring knife to peel off the spiky tips along the stalk of the asparagus, along with the woodiest leaves just below the tip. You also want to snap off the most fibrous bottom section of the spear. To do this, use one hand to hold the spear gently in the center of the stem and the other hand at the base and snap. It should break off cleanly where the tough, fibrous section meets the tender part of the spear. It is important to elevate the asparagus off the table while peeling or scrubbing by using a loaf pan. This preserves the integrity of the asparagus by avoiding unnecessary bending or breaking.

Determine whether to use a peeler or an abrasive green scrub pad on the asparagus. A green scrub pad is best used on asparagus with a narrow diameter, as this will prevent excess removal of the asparagus.

Fill the stockpot with water to within a few inches of the top. You want to use a generous amount so that the water retains its heat when you add the vegetables. Bundle and tie 6 to 7 asparagus (depending on the size); asparagus tips are fragile, and bundling helps protect them from damage during blanching. Add salt to the boiling water and take a minute to let it return to a boil. Make sure you add enough salt to the water—Chef Keller says your water should taste as salty as seawater. Place asparagus bundles in boiling water. Add only the amount of asparagus bundles to maintain the rapid boil. The blanching process may require several batches. After 2½ minutes, use the tip of a paring knife to check for doneness. If necessary, continue cooking until tender.

Cut away the twine and arrange the asparagus spears on a platter to accompany your main dish.

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LEARN MORE

- Chef Keller demonstrates how to test for doneness in meat by comparing its feel to the feel of the pad of your thumb. Practice this method until you're comfortable using your sense of touch to check whether meat is rare, medium-rare, or well-done.

- Chef Keller uses several terms in this chapter that may not be familiar to you. Here's what they mean:

  / ***Beurre noisette:*** Translated from the French, it means hazelnut butter, but in English, it is more commonly known as brown butter. It's made by heating unsalted butter at a low temperature until its milk solids separate and turn a tawny hazelnut color.

  / ***Beurre pommade:*** A softened butter, brought to room temperature, and whisked to a creamy consistency.

  / ***Deckle:*** A piece of fatty muscle in a cow that connects the hindquarter to the rib cage, though Chef Keller also thinks of it as his favorite cut of beef.

  / ***Maillard browning:*** At the chemical level, it's a reaction that occurs when enzymes and amino acids in certain ingredients are subjected to high heat. In the kitchen, though, it refers to the crusty, flavorful browning and appealing aromas that often arise from grilling, searing, and roasting certain foods.