

How to Cook Steak in a Pan

A beautifully browned steak can make a simple dinner feel special. This guide walks you through the pan method, one clear step at a time.

MAKES 2 SERVINGS • PREP 5 MIN • COOK APPROXIMATELY 8-14 MIN • REST AT LEAST 3 MIN

Ingredients

- 2 boneless sirloin or strip steaks, about 1 inch thick and 6-8 ounces each
- 2 teaspoons neutral high-heat oil
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon butter, optional

Tools: heavy cast iron or stainless skillet, tongs, instant-read thermometer.

Troubleshooting

Common mistake: A wet surface or crowded pan makes browning harder. Do not judge safety by color alone.

How to Make It

1. Pat the steaks very dry and season both sides. Turn on the kitchen ventilation. Do not leave steaks out for hours to warm up.
2. Heat the skillet over medium-high heat until hot, then add oil. It should shimmer without smoking heavily.
3. Lay steaks away from you, leaving space between them. Sear about 2-3 minutes per side to build a brown crust.
4. Reduce to medium and continue cooking, turning every minute or so. Add optional butter near the end, lowering heat if it darkens. Timing varies greatly; insert a thermometer from the side into the thickest center.
5. For USDA's safe minimum, reach 145 F before removing from heat and rest at least 3 minutes. Slice across the grain and serve. Thicker steaks need more time; reduce heat to avoid burning the outside.

Jane’s Note

Start with steaks of similar thickness so they are easier to cook together. Cowboy butter is an optional finishing sauce.

Doneness preferences below 145 F are below USDA's recommended safe minimum; this beginner guide uses the safe minimum rather than a rare-steak chart.

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