

KNOW YOUR BEEF



BEEF CARVING

Carving Guide for Beef

Carved roast beef is one of life's most satisfying pleasures. When it's beautifully cooked, carved and presented it will delight your guests, help to reduce portion costs and boost profits. A roast that has been handled incorrectly or poorly prepared, on the other hand, will do just the opposite. Here we'll give the basic pointers on how to carve as they apply to some of the most popular roasting cuts.

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The Carving Brochure was developed by Canada Beef, a not-for-profit education and promotion organization representing Canada's beef producers. For more information visit us at our website. © Canada Beef, 2016.

GENERAL RULES FOR CARVING

RESTING: Once you've removed the roast from the oven, let it rest at room temperature before carving. Resting beef allows the temperatures of the hot exterior and the cooler interior to equalize. While this is going on the internal temperature will continue to rise by as much as 5° F to 10° F (3° C to 5° C). Resting allows the meat to firm up and increase its moisture holding capacity, making it easier to carve and preserve those precious juices. Larger roasts like the inside round can take over 30 minutes to get to this stage, so allow for this extra time when planning your cooking schedule.

DRIP TRAY: Place a tray under the cutting board – which should be spotless and large enough to accommodate the roast comfortably – to catch any juices produced whilst carving. You can also use a board that has a “well” to catch juices.

AT THE CARVING STATION: A sharp carving knife is essential: a dull knife will squeeze out juices from the roast – and make carving a lot more strenuous. Carve using long, confident strokes; this uses less energy and produces slices that are more visually appealing. Have everything you'll need ready at hand: your sharp carving knife, a fork, a steel, clean cloths, condiments, and somewhere to put any debris – especially on a buffet line.

THE FIRST LAW OF CARVING – CUT ACROSS THE GRAIN:

Cutting across the long muscle fibers reduces them to just the thickness of the slice, making the meat much easier to chew. You can usually approximate grain direction visually, but knowing the grain direction of the constituent muscles of a particular roast – especially if there's more than one muscle group – will greatly simplify the task. Once you've found the direction of the grain, secure roast firmly with your fork; try to pierce the meat with the fork as seldom as possible as juices will escape with each puncture.

PORTION CONTROL: Make sure your staff knows exactly the required portion size – the number of slices and their thickness – preferably by demonstrating before service begins. Having staff practice with a portion scale is a good idea.

DONENESS: Many guests – approaching a majority according to research – like their beef cooked beyond the medium rare stage and recoil from the sight of “bloody” meat. Others will be disappointed if rare or medium rare servings are not on offer. A way to overcome this is to offer both options; either cook several roasts (or cut a large roast in two) to differing degrees of doneness. Either way, the guests' preferences and eating pleasure should always be uppermost in the chef's mind when making decisions about doneness.



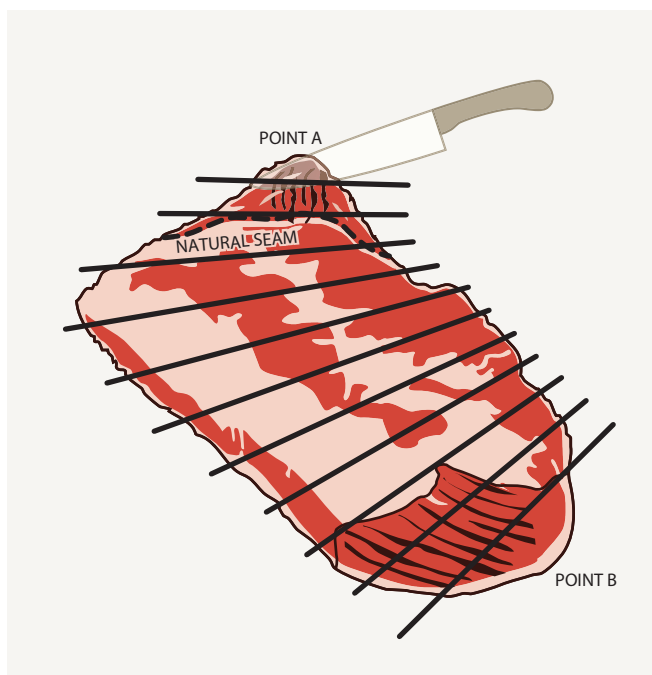
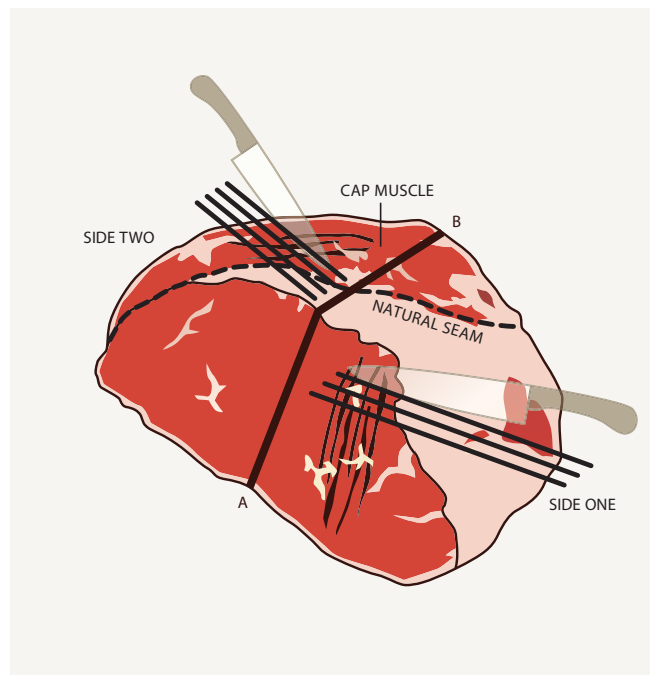
INSIDE (TOP) ROUND

This cut, lean, fine textured with little connective tissue or internal fat, is a very popular choice as a carving roast. Because several muscles make up this cut the grain runs in various directions, cutting across the grain consistently can be a bit of a challenge. This cut can be purchased in a split format or split on-site to keep the roast size manageable.

WEIGHT RANGE: 20-23 LBS/9-10 KG.

TO CARVE

1. Identify the cap muscle and remove it by following the seam.
You can roast separately or use for trim. This will allow for ease of carving the roast. To carve the cap muscle, carve against the grain which runs at right angles (90°) to the underlying muscle.
2. Carve the rest of the roast from end-to-end, varying the angle of the knife as you go to cut consistently at right angles to the grain.
3. Alternatively, cut this large roast (20-23 lbs/9-10 kg) in half as shown in diagram (side A to side B) leaving the cap muscle on one side (or purchase the split format.) You can split after cooking, but you risk the loss of the juices that help give this cut its excellent flavour.
4. **SIDE 1:** This can be quite easily carved as shown in the diagram, angling slightly to maintain an even across-the-grain cut. Carving with the grain will result in a string like appearance – this is a visual clue to change the carving direction.
5. **SIDE 2:** Carve the cap muscle as described above leaving the balance of the roast, which can easily be carved end-to-end.



OUTSIDE (BOTTOM) ROUND FLAT

An economical cut ideally suited for a carving station. The eye of round and connective tissue have been removed from the outside (bottom) round to produce this high yielding cut. Special attention is needed when carving this cut as the grain direction does not run in the same direction end-to-end. Not quite as tender as the inside round, and with less marbling, slow roasting with the fat side up is highly recommended.

WEIGHT RANGE: 13-16 LBS/6-7.3 KG.

TO CARVE

1. Place roast fat side up, and start carving at point A (see diagram).
2. Gradually shift the carving angle clockwise, following the changing grain direction in a semi-circle all the way to point B.

TOP SIRLOIN

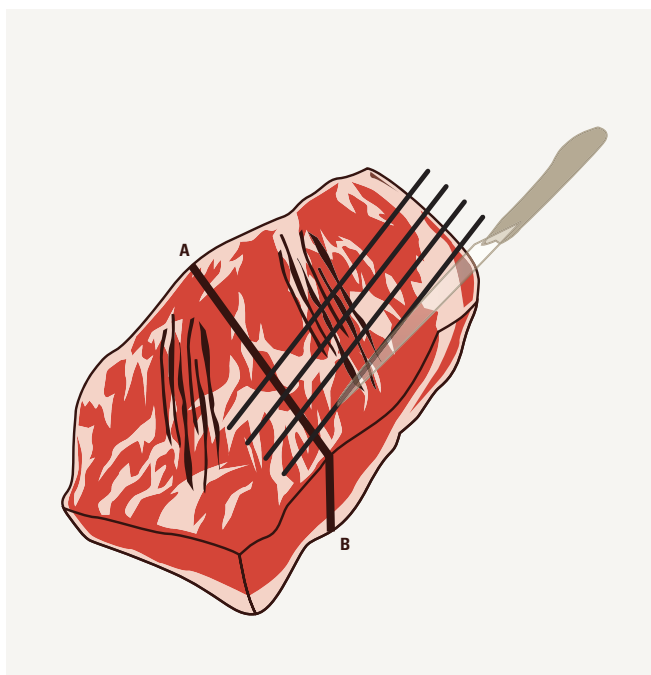
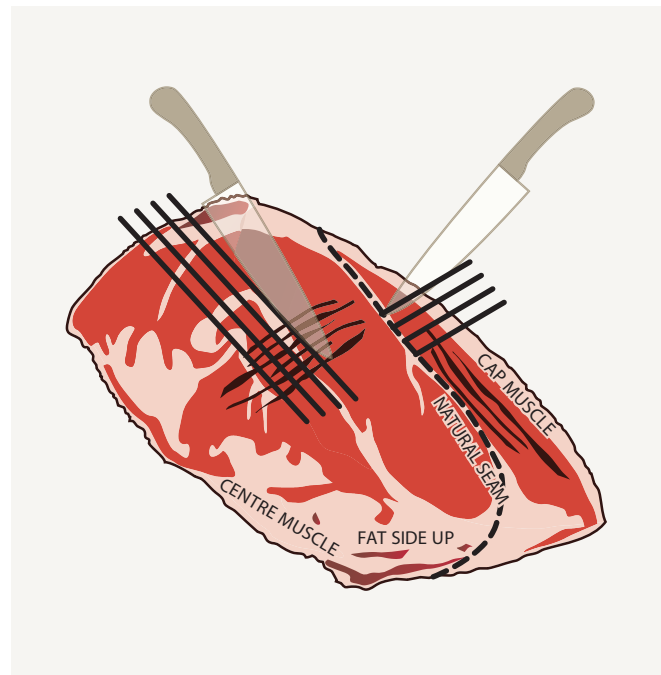
The top sirloin roast is a foodservice staple, and justifiably so.

Well marbled yet economical, the top sirloin delivers both tenderness and great beef flavour. It is made up of two principle muscles that run at right angles to each other, so prior knowledge of this cut's anatomy will make carving simple and efficient.

WEIGHT RANGE: 9-15.5 LBS/4-7 KG

TO CARVE

1. With the roast fat side up, it is easy to identify the cap (coulotte) muscle. The grain of the cap runs at right angles to the centre muscle.
2. Carve the cap first, before proceeding to carve the main muscle. Only cut to a point where only the natural seam separates the two muscle groups. Once the cap has been carved, you will have full access to the centre muscle.



BRISKET

The brisket has a coarse, visible grain structure, making identification of the grain direction – and carving – very simple.


WEIGHT RANGE: 10-12 LBS/4-5.4 KG.

TO CARVE

1. A full slice, cut across the grain, can be up to 14 inches (30 cm) cut from the widest section, which is too wide for a tidy plate presentation, unless folded. We recommend cutting the brisket – with the grain, into two equal pieces (see diagram A, B).
2. Carve thin slices at right angles to the grain (and to the first cut). An electric meat slicer is recommended whenever practical.

DIAGRAM LEGEND


CARVING DIRECTION


NATURAL SEAM


GRAIN DIRECTION

 A B
SPLIT LOCATION

STRIP LOIN

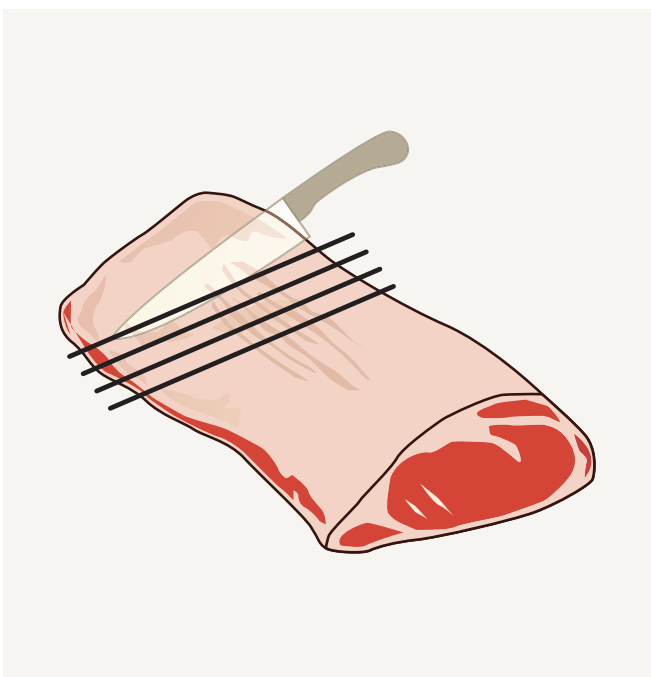
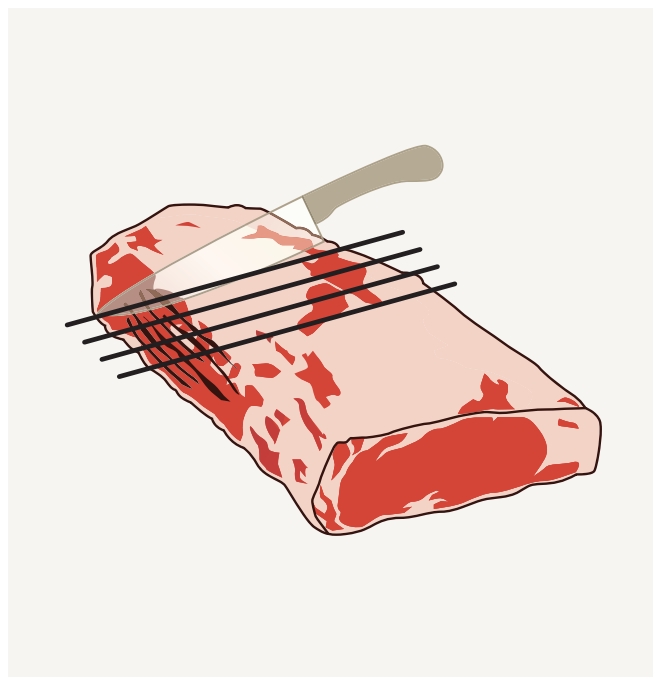
Not just for steaking, the strip loin is an excellent premium cut for those wishing to offer an alternative to the standing rib roast. Because the strip loin has less visible internal fat and marbling than the rib, leave $\frac{1}{4}$ inch fat covering on average.

WEIGHT RANGE: 12-14 LBS/5.4-6.4 KG.

TO CARVE

Place the roast facing you lengthwise, with the fat side on top. Carve from end-to-end.

Roasts from the loin, including the strip loin and rib, require special attention. To maximize yield, flavour and juiciness, always cook "low and slow"



RIB-EYE, LIP ON

This is the same cut as prime rib, but with non-edible components (the fat cap and the bones) removed. When slow roasted the yield will be a significant improvement over the traditional standing rib roast. There is only one main muscle, making it a cinch to carve. Generously marbled to keep it juicy and flavourful, this King of Cuts will be the star of any buffet.

WEIGHT RANGE: 9-11 LBS/4-5 KG.

TO CARVE

Place the roast lengthwise facing you, with the fat cap uppermost. Carve from end-to-end.

For optimum cooked results, ensure the raw products are prepared in accordance with Canada Beef's cutting technical sheets. The removal of the backstrap, connective tissue, silverskin, etc. are all important to obtaining a great finished roast.

BEEF ROASTING

MYTHS AND FACTS

Roast beef is one of the most consistently popular items at foodservice – deservedly so. Generations of chefs have added to the body of knowledge around this perennial favourite. Some of these bits of folk wisdom are grounded in fact, but many are just myths.

We've outlined some of these myths – and truths – about roasting to help you fine-tune your roasting techniques.

MYTH: Fresh beef is better than frozen beef.

Properly handled, there is no evidence to suggest that, in terms of quality, fresh beef performs distinguishably better than beef once frozen. Leaving frozen beef to thaw at room temperature or in a bath of warm water will cause excessive moisture loss; more crucially, these techniques can pose food safety hazards. Using a microwave gives very uneven results. The best method for thawing frozen roasts is to place the wrapped beef on a baking sheet and let the beef thaw slowly in the fridge. Thaw at between 32°F to 40°F (0°C to 4°C). This will minimize fluid loss, increasing yield, and inhibit bacterial contamination. Smaller roasts will take a day or two to thaw, but larger roasts can take several days, so plan well in advance. Thaw the roast completely: if the roast is still frozen in the interior the outside will be over-cooked by the time the centre is ready.

FACT: When properly handled (frozen quickly and thawed slowly), beef that was once frozen can be every bit as moist and tender as fresh beef.

MYTH: Seasoning meat before cooking makes it dry.

Seasoning with salt before cooking will draw a small amount of moisture from the meat, but not nearly enough to dry it out. But adding salt, especially the large crystals of sea salt, shortly before roasting will do no harm: in fact, the salt will tend to draw the flavour of other seasonings (pepper, other spices and herbs) into the meat with it. Just make sure that the meat surface is dry and avoid masking the natural flavour of beef by over seasoning.

FACT: Salt – along with your favourite seasonings – added prior to roasting will actually improve the final product.

MYTH: Keep the roast covered during cooking.

When a roast is tightly covered while roasting, steam will accumulate around the roast. This means you are no longer dry-roasting but steaming your roast – and steam is an efficient heat conductor. For smaller roasts the result will be increased moisture loss; texture will also be affected. This is less of a problem for larger roasts (like the inside and outside rounds) because of their relatively small surface area compared to their mass. Larger roasts should still be roasted uncovered initially to develop that delicious brown crust.

FACT: Cover larger roasts once the desired outside colour has been reached, and lower the oven temperature for the remaining cooking time.

MYTH: Searing meat seals in the juices.

Searing is still an excellent technique for smaller roasts, giving the roast a pleasant visual appearance and taste. Larger roasts will develop a crust naturally through the sheer length of time they take to cook. Juices will still be lost from a seared roast just as easily as from one that hasn't been seared. The best method to minimize cooking loss due to juices escaping is to roast slowly at a low oven temperature – after a preliminary hot blast to develop a crust if necessary.

FACT: Searing meat does not “seal in the juices”

MYTH: I need a heavy fat cap to keep my roasts moist.

Prime ribs have traditionally been roasted with a thick, heavy fat cap attached. Leaving the fat cap on with the level of marbling in today's cattle is unnecessary, and will affect the yield – negatively. Cooking methods have changed as well; the old style of roasting at 350°F to 450°F (177°C to 232°C) has given way to low-temperature cooking over a longer time span. This results in greater juiciness and yield. Furthermore, with the use of advanced oven techniques such as combination ovens (combining heat and moisture), fat cap-added roasting (and the expense that goes along with it) can be safely and profitably forgotten.

FACT: low temperature cooking methods, new technologies, and today's high-quality beef all make the use of the fat cap a thing of the past.

MYTH: A bone-in product will provide more flavour to the meat than a boneless cut.

Bone-in products may enhance flavour during the aging process (especially in dry aging). While a bone-in product such as prime rib or hip of beef may have some additional aesthetic qualities, the bone does not add an additional flavour advantage. As with a fat cap, the bones on a prime rib, when removed, reduce the yield and increase the portion cost significantly. When comparing a bone-in vs. boneless product, don't just look at price, but consider the usable yield the two specifications can provide.

FACT: A bone-in product doesn't add more flavour; it only increases costs and reduces yield.

