

## How to Cook a Medium-Rare New York Strip Steak on a Stovetop

Cooking a steak to a medium rare doneness is the application of heat to a cut of beef to achieve a warm pink center with browned edges. For many people, cooking a steak can seem intimidating and daunting, but cooking a cut of New York Strip is easy when you understand the process and learn how to prepare, sear, check doneness, and serve your steak.

### Notes:

- This guide focuses specifically on the process tailored to a New York Strip steak (which can be identified in Figure One) and the cooking times are specific to this cut of steak. Other cuts of steak will need varied cooking times and using a different cut of steak in accordance with this guide will not produce the same results.



Figure One: A raw cut of New York Strip steak. It is identified by its long shape and it is about one inch thick with a strip of fat on the side, known as the "fat cap." *Photo by Ted Eytan on Flickr, royalty-free.*

To cook a New York Strip Steak, you will need...

- A New York Strip cut of steak
- An oil with a high smoke point, such as canola or vegetable oil to help the steak cook
- A cast iron skillet to cook the steak in
  - Note: If you do not have a cast iron skillet, you can also use a stainless steel pan for a stovetop.
- A pair of tongs
- A plate
- Black pepper and salt for seasoning
- A sheet of aluminum foil
- (Optional) A meat thermometer

Once all of these materials have been gathered, you can begin preparing the steak and the equipment.

## Part One: Preparing the Steak

Preparing the steak is the first step in the process in which the steak is readied, the pan is preheated, and all materials are prepared before the steak is seared. This step is important because it allows the cooking process to flow more smoothly and aids in achieving the desired “medium rare” result.

### Safety Note:

Before beginning the preparation of your steak, please wash your hands thoroughly before handling raw meat in order to prevent illness or contamination. Raw meat intended for consumption within 24 hours should be stored in a refrigerator.

1a. Remove your steak from the fridge approximately 20-30 minutes before cooking. Allow the steak to reach room temperature before proceeding. This allows the steak to sear better and cook more evenly, which aids immensely in achieving a medium rare sear.

1b. Sprinkle salt and pepper on each side of the steak and the fat cap. Seasoning the steak contributes to the flavor and texture of the steak, allowing a flavorful crust to form when cooking.

1c. Preheat your cast iron skillet (or stainless steel pan) on the stovetop and set the temperature to medium-high heat. This process allows the pan to get hot so that the steak can cook.

1d. Place a tablespoon of oil inside of the skillet or pan. Allow it to preheat for about 5 minutes or until there is light smoke and the oil sizzles. Once the oil begins to lightly smoke or the oil is sizzling, The steak is ready to be seared.

## Part Two: Searing the Steak

Searing the steak is a process in which the steak is cooked for a specific amount of time on each side (including the fat cap) in order to achieve a medium rare doneness and bring the steak to a safe internal temperature.

### Safety Note:

This step requires the use of oil in a hot pan, which can splash back, and cause injury especially when setting something inside the pan. Please proceed with caution.

2a. Pick up the steak with a pair of tongs and hold it vertically. Hold the steak with the fat cap side down in the pan for 30-45 seconds. Cook the fat cap until it develops a browned crust. Searing the fat cap allows the fat on the steak to become flavorful and also adds natural oils from the fat into the pan, which helps when searing.

2b. Once the fat cap has cooked, place the steak face down in the pan and facing away from you. This process will begin to cook the meat itself.

2c. Allow the side of the steak to sear for two minutes. This is when one side of the steak will begin to cook. During this step, the side that is face down will begin to brown and cook (see Figure Two.)



Figure Two: A seasoned cut New York Strip steak with a seared fat cap cooking in a sizzling pan with oil on a stove. This is how the steak will look when you first lay it on its side. *Author's photograph.*

2d. After the two minutes are up, pick up the steak with the tongs and flip it over to the opposite side. Rest the opposite side of the steak down in the pan. This process is to allow the other side of the steak to cook to a medium rare state.

2e. Allow the other side of the steak to cook for another two minutes. This step will complete the process of searing the steak.

Once the two minutes of searing the opposite end of the steak are up, you can now begin the process of checking the steak's doneness.

## Part Three: Checking the Doneness

Checking the Doneness of a steak is the process of estimating the cooked state of a steak either by inserting a meat thermometer and observing the temperature or using a “hand trick” to compare the toughness of one's hand to the texture of the steak.

Option 3a. Insert the pointy metal end of a meat thermometer into the middle of the steak. If the steak has reached a medium rare temperature, the thermometer will read 130-135°F, or 54-57°C.

Option 3b. Use the “hand trick.” Take your hand and firmly touch your middle finger to your thumb. Take your other hand and pinch the fat below your thumb and take notice of the feeling (modeled in Figure Three). Then, using your tongs, grab the steak and gently pinch the steak's center. If the steak has a similar feeling to your thumb, the steak has reached a “medium rare” sear of doneness.

Once you have determined that the steak has reached a “medium rare” sear, you can move onto the final step of the process: serving your steak.



Figure Three. A hand with the middle and thumb fingers touching. This is how your hand should look when using the “hand trick” method to estimate doneness. *Author's photograph. Note: mild cosmetic enhancements performed using Google Gemini.*

## Part Four: Serving the Steak

Serving the Steak is the final step of the process in which the cooked steak is removed from the stove, rested, and sliced in order to be served.

### Safety Note:

This step requires the handling of hot meat and surfaces. Please allow meat to cool before slicing or eating. This step also involves the use of tongs. If your tongs were used to handle raw meat, wash them before handling your cooked steak to avoid illness or cross contamination.

4a. Once you have confirmed the steak has reached a medium rare sear, turn off your stove and move the pan to a vacant burner.

4b. Use your washed tongs to remove the steak and transfer it to a plate.

4c. Place a sheet of aluminum foil over your steak and allow it to cool for 5-10 minutes before slicing.

4d. Once your steak is done cooling, slice the steak and take notice of the center. If the center is warm and pink with browned edges (see Figure Four), you have successfully cooked a medium rare steak.



Figure Four. Two photos of a cooked New York Strip steak. The photo on the left shows the steak sliced in the middle with a warm pink center and browned edges. The photo on the right shows the steak sliced into multiple strips, each with a warm pink center and browned edges. *Author's photograph.*

## Conclusion

Cooking a medium rare steak on a stovetop involves four major steps: preparing the steak, searing the steak, checking doneness, and serving the steak. By following this process carefully, you can achieve a steak with a warm pink center with browned edges cooked on a stovetop.

Common challenges when cooking a New York Strip steak include over-cooking or removing the steak too early from the stovetop. This can be mediated by only allowing each side to sear for 2-2 ½ minutes and using a timer to measure the time accurately.

For further guidance on cooking other cuts of steak or other methods, consult reputable cooking sources. Following these steps ensures a medium rare New York Strip steak, delicious and ready to be served at home.

## References

Eytan, T. (2020, October 11). *New York Strip Steak, Washington, DC USA 285 19207*.

Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/taedc/50460437923>