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THE

# NOLAN RYAN

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# BEEF & BARBECUE COOKBOOK

RECIPES FROM A  
**TEXAS KITCHEN**

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NOLAN RYAN

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**THE**

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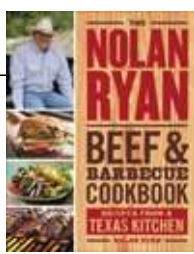
**NOLAN RYAN**

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**WITH JR ROSENTHAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY GENO LORO**



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**FOR MY MOTHER,**  
Martha Lee Ryan



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# THE EDUCATION OF A CATTLEMAN

BY NOLAN RYAN, WITH RUTH, WENDY, REESE & REID RYAN

On a warm and windy day in April in my hometown of Alvin, Texas, a very special place for my family and me, I announced to my parents—at the age of ten—that I was ready to get into the cattle business.

I talked my parents into taking me to visit a dairy farmer who was a member of our church, and I bought a day-old calf from him and started bottle-feeding it. I went back the next week to buy another calf, and that was the first time I learned about price increases, because the first calf cost a dollar fifty and the second (only ten days later) cost two dollars.

I built up my small herd to about seven heifers, but once I got into junior high school and started playing football, basketball, and baseball, I decided to sell the heifers. That was the right thing to do at the time, but a serious commitment to ranching was my future.

I had spent my summers helping out on my uncle's dairy farm, and then, as I got older, I'd go over and help him with milking. After a while I knew I didn't want to be in the dairy business, but I think that it is where my love of land and my love of cattle started.

Once I met Ruth, my high-school sweetheart, I was focused on playing sports, doing my best in school, and spending as much time with her as possible. She is a wonderful person and has been tremendously supportive of everything I've strived to achieve. She always enjoyed the cattle business, and has appreciated how much pleasure I get from being on ranches and spending time around livestock.

With all the factors that are out of your control in ranching and agriculture, I can honestly say that if you don't have passion and dedication, I don't see how you can stay with it. I have applied many of the same principles that guided me in baseball—focus, determination, and discipline—to my cattle operation.



In fact, I got back into the cattle business while I was pitching for the California Angels in 1973. I had been taking classes at Alvin Community College during the off-season, studying and reading up on cattle breeding and genetics. I was still living in Alvin, about an hour outside of Houston, and finally decided it was time to start a herd. George Pugh Sr., the father of a good friend, was

retiring from working in the oil fields, and I knew that I could hire him to look after my cattle operation while I was pitching for the Angels.

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Alvin used to be a big dairy farming community, but a lot of those dairy farmers switched over to raising beef cattle. One day I had Jersey cows and bred them with a Brahman bull to create half-and-half Jersey-Brahman cows. Then they came back with a Hereford bull, and I felt that a three-way cross would be a good base cow, so I bought their heifers two years in a row.

The first piece of ranch property I bought in Gonzalez County dates all the way back to just after the Mets won the World Series in 1969. From that first ranch in 1970, we have been buying and building ranches for more than forty years. When a piece of land would come up that would work in our operation, we would try to acquire it, and then we would try to acquire anything that came up next to that, in order to amass as much contiguous land as we could.

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**WENDY:** “I always thought of my dad as a cattle rancher. Our family would travel to cattle sales all over Texas and he would host auctions at our ranch. Spending time at our ranch was our most precious family time. We could get away from the routines of being in town and just enjoy being around the cows. I had a love for the ranch and the cattle business, and then I reached a point where I really didn’t know what career path to follow after college. Dad asked me, “What do you love?” And I told him that I love the ranch more than anything. That’s when I decided to make the ranch my job. I went to the Master’s program in Ranch Management at Texas Christian University. It covered everything from learning about grasses for grazing to actually working the cattle and learning the cattle market. As soon as I got out of the program I went to work for my dad’s ranch business and I worked to update the technology of the cattle business. My kids love spending time with their grandfather on the ranch and checking on the cows. It’s a family passion that really spans all the generations.”





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**RUTH:** “Ever since I’ve known him he’s had a passion for the cattle industry. He has always studied books about cattle and ranching. I knew he would stay in the business in some way.”

Nowadays, our basic herd is Beefmaster cattle, an American breed that was started right here in Texas to survive and thrive in the arid heat. It is a three-way cross between the Brahman, the Hereford, and the Shorthorn. Then we cross them with either Red or Black Angus bulls. We also keep a purebred Beefmaster herd.

My success in baseball gave me the economic resources I needed to get started in the cattle business. I have taken the same measured, careful, and passionate approach to all my business operations, and buying and selling cattle and starting Nolan Ryan Beef have been no different.

When Charlie Bradbury first proposed lending my name to the Beefmaster brand of beef, I had to give the matter a lot of thought. At that point I knew nothing about the commercial end of the beef business. We brought in all the industry experts, from retail to meat science, for a two-day conference in San Antonio to debate the pros and cons. After much reflection and analysis we decided to move forward with the formation of Nolan Ryan Beef. Our goal has always been to produce the best beef product available from the best cattle.

My son Reese is a tremendous asset to the company. He has a good feel for the cattle business. He is also an astute adviser on all subjects about beef; he can see trends in the consumer market and understands the changes and shifts in the economy. In fact, all my kids have been a huge help to me in my various business endeavors. And my son Reid was promoted to the position of president of the Houston Astros, an achievement that makes me extremely proud.

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**REID:** “Growing up, I always viewed my dad as both a cattle rancher and a baseball player. He would go to cattle auctions with us kids and teach us how to take care of cows, and we learned the business of being able to look five years down the road to figure out what a cow would develop into and how it would bring success to the family ranch business. That patience, bred in the cattle business, was a great boon to my dad in the baseball business as CEO of the Texas Rangers. He had the patience and vision to be able to look at the long-term picture, which is rare in baseball, a pitch-by-pitch business where most owners are focused on what a player is doing for you that day, that game.

Food has always been a big part of the Ryan family get-togethers. All the kids learned at a very young age how to behave at nice restaurants without making fools of ourselves. And when my dad came home during the off-season, the Sunday night cookout was a family tradition. My dad was (and is) an excellent grill chef, and he has always loved to cook steaks over charcoal to produce a great meal.”

**REESE:** “Most people think of my father as one of the greatest power pitchers in the history of Major League Baseball; however, that’s not exactly how I view him. To me, he has always been a cattleman as well as a baseball player. Our family spent most of the summer at the ballpark or traveling with the team during the baseball season, but the off-season meant family time with cattle auctions and hunting trips for deer, quail, and dove. Nolan was an avid hunter who taught me how to shoot and to respect wildlife, and I took great pleasure in that special feeling that came with growing up around cattle and learning to love those special times we cooked food outdoors, under the stars.

My sister Wendy and I followed in our father’s footsteps with a love for the cattle business. We both attended the Texas Christian University Ranch Management graduate program, and this is where I learned about the processing and marketing of beef—a very different perspective on the industry. My dad’s love of cattle ranching inspired us to work on his ranches, to help with buying and selling cattle, and to do whatever was necessary to make the cattle operation successful.

When my father decided to explore selling beef through the formation of Nolan Ryan Beef, I knew I wanted to help and joined the board of directors. But it is the personal side of my dad’s love for cattle and the Western lifestyle that has had the greatest impact on me. I have passed along my passion for ranching, wildlife, and hunting to my family; my daughters, Caroline and Julia, and I go hunting with our friend and fellow cattle rancher Marjorie Bledsoe, who was raised working cattle and hunting in the 1930s.

Our entire family has been blessed by Nolan’s passion for cattle ranching, and I am fortunate that I’m the son of a cattleman—and a great father.”

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Cooking over charcoal, mesquite, and hickory has always been one of my passions. I love the smoke-infused flavors that make a grilled T-bone, sirloin, or tenderloin something special. I am always working to take my flavors and techniques to another level. Growing up in Texas allowed me the chance to enjoy the regional flavors of the Southwest, and this style of cooking has become increasingly popular in the past twenty years.



In deciding to write this cookbook, I wanted to share my love for Texas barbecue and for grilling, roasting, pan-searing, and braising all cuts of beef. And I wanted to find a chef who could express and communicate the authentic southwestern and Mexican style of grilled-over-fire beef dishes of South Texas. I was fortunate to be able to enlist Cristobal Vazquez ("Chef Cris") executive chef at the Rangers Ballpark in Arlington. The recipes we came up with are in some ways just the starting point on a journey of southwestern flavor: our goal is to liberate any chef to make good choices based on personal preferences, what's in the pantry, what's within the budget, and who is on the guest list for brunch, lunch, or dinner.

We worked together to create some seventy-five recipes that express my love of beef and cooking over fire in the great outdoors, and my passion for sharing these special dishes with friends and family.

Y'all enjoy!



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# A NOTE ON THE RECIPES

## **CRISTOBAL G. VAZQUEZ**

### **Executive Chef, Texas Rangers Baseball**

Working with Nolan Ryan to develop the recipes for this cookbook has been without a doubt the highlight of my career as a chef. I've had the pleasure to cook for Nolan and Ruth Ryan for the past five years, and through experimentation and improvisation, we have learned to make the fresh, hearty, flavorful, and delicious food that they love.

We organized the book as a tour of the various cuts and preparations of beef, starting with a chapter of inventive burgers and sandwiches that capture the ballpark experience—taken to a higher level with the freshest ingredients and the flavors of the Southwest. Next come the cuts that work perfectly for grilling (indoors or outdoors), like rib-eye, T-bone, sirloin, and tenderloin. We then address Sunday roasts (some of Nolan's favorite family recipes) and regional specialties like beef ribs, brisket, and flank steaks that feature my special Tex-Mex spices. The journey concludes with classic side dishes, salads, and desserts, including Ruth Ryan's Special Occasion Carrot Cake.

Nolan and Ruth really appreciate good food. I talked to both of them almost every day to find out what they wanted to eat. "The Bunker," the private lounge where the Ryan family dined before each game while Nolan worked as CEO of the Texas Rangers. Nolan loves grilled T-bones, rib-eye carne asada, green bean casserole, and Sunday pot roast. Ruth enjoys the prime rib and, for dessert, my homemade flan with Tia Maria.

These recipes are based on Nolan's love for the Mexican and southwestern food of South Texas and my roots as a chef growing up in Aguascalientes, Mexico. This region of north-central Mexico is known for bullfighting, a state fair that attracts people from all over Mexico for its food, and the many beautiful hot springs from which my hometown derives its name.



Aguascalientes is the culinary home for *enchiladas verdes*, *carnitas* (crispy pork), *barbacoa* (meat cooked BBQ style), and *carne asada*. The food is fresh and honest. In Mexico, the concept of farm-to-table is nothing new. We have always prepared foods based on the local produce and meats to maximize freshness and flavor.

In crafting these recipes, we have integrated my love of Mexican ingredients such as guajillo peppers and Mexican chorizo (not cured like Spanish chorizo, but a fresh sausage that has to be cooked) with Nolan's appreciation for the simplicity and clarity of a beautiful grilled tenderloin or beef ribs cooked lovingly over charcoal.

Nolan, Ruth, and I want you to enjoy putting these recipes to the test at a Father's Day cookout with your friends and family or at a special dinner when you'll discover that cooking prime rib is well worth the effort. We have given you simple, easy-to-follow instructions. And be on the lookout for Nolan's Tips—techniques for grilling and drawing out flavor as well as serving suggestions that can help you elevate every meal to something truly special.

Working with Nolan on this book has been a true pleasure. We hope you enjoy many wonderful meals from these recipes with your friends and family for years to come!

# NOLAN RYAN'S GUIDE TO COOKING WITH BEEF

These guidelines are my go-to for preparing all of my dishes to perfection.

The cooking times in the charts that follow are those recommended by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. Note that these are total cooking times (not per side) and should be considered general guidelines. Variances in specific makes and models of gas grills and ovens and the variability of charcoal cooking, depending on environmental factors and differences among types of wood and charcoal, will impact results. Take note of the suggested cooking times given within each recipe, but for best results, get to know your own grill setup. Following the charts are a few of my recommendations for buying, storing, and cooking beef, to get you headed in the right direction.





## GRILLING

Here are my top five tips for great grilling:

- It's fine to take your beef right from the refrigerator to the grill—there's no need to bring the beef to room temperature.
- Always trim all visible fat before grilling to prevent flare-ups.
- Use a pair of metal tongs to turn roasts and steaks rather than a fork so you won't lose the delicious juices inside.
- High heat can char the exterior of the beef but leave the interior undercooked. Always use a meat thermometer to test the doneness of the meat.
- Have fun!

## Gas Grilling

The guidelines in the chart on [here](#) were based on the temperatures of a Weber Genesis gas grill set to medium heat, unless otherwise specified. Gas grill makes and models vary widely, so grilling times may need to be modified. Always carefully read your owner's manual for specific grilling instructions.

*The cooking times in the charts range from medium-rare (145°F internal temperature) to medium (160°F).*

## Grilling with Charcoal

When coals become ash-covered, spread in a single layer and check cooking temperature by carefully cupping the palm of your hand above the coals at cooking height. Now, count the seconds it takes before the heat compels you to pull your hand away from the grill (it will take 4 seconds at medium heat, less for high).

# GRILLING

## THICKNESS/WEIGHT

## CHARCOAL COOKING TIME

## GAS COOKING TIME

### CHUCK

Boneless Eye Chuck Steak	¾ inch	9–11 minutes	9–12 minutes
Shoulder Top Blade Steak (Flat Iron)	8 ounces	10–14 minutes	12–16 minutes
Shoulder Center Steak (Ranch)	¾ inch	8–11 minutes	8–11 minutes
Under Blade Center Steak (Denver Cut, boneless)	½ inch	4–7 minutes	5–8 minutes

### RIB

Rib Steak, small end	¾ inch 1 inch	7–10 minutes 10–15 minutes	7–10 minutes 10–15 minutes
Rib-Eye Steak	¾ inch 1 inch	7–10 minutes 10–14 minutes	7–9 minutes 9–14 minutes

### LOIN

Porterhouse/T-Bone Steak	¾ inch 1 inch	8–11 minutes 11–16 minutes	9–13 minutes 15–19 minutes
Boneless Top Loin Strip Steak	¾ inch	7–10 minutes	7–10 minutes
Tenderloin Steak	¾ inch 1 inch	7–10 minutes 10–14 minutes	7–10 minutes 11–15 minutes

### SIRLOIN

Boneless Top Sirloin Steak	¾ inch 1 inch	7–11 minutes 11–15 minutes	8–13 minutes 13–16 minutes
Tri-Tip Steak	¾ inch	8–10 minutes	8–10 minutes

### ROUND (Nolan recommends cooking steaks from the round section to medium-rare, 145°F.)

Round Sirloin Tip Center Steak	¾ inch	8–9 minutes	8–11 minutes
Round Sirloin Tip Side Steak	¾ inch	9–11 minutes	7–9 minutes
Bottom Round Steak	¾ inch	8–10 minutes	11–14 minutes
Top Round Steak	¾ inch	10–11 minutes	10–11 minutes
Eye of Round Steak	¾ inch	10–12 minutes	10–12 minutes

### SKIRT AND FLANK

Skirt Steak	1–1½ pounds	7–12 minutes	8–12 minutes
Flank Steak	1½–2 pounds	11–16 minutes	16–21 minutes

### HAMBURGERS (Nolan recommends cooking hamburgers to at least medium, 160°F.)

Beef patties	½ inch (4 ounces)	8–10 minutes	7–9 minutes
	¾ inch (6 ounces)	11–15 minutes	13–14 minutes

# PAN-SEARING

## THICKNESSWEIGHT

## COOKING TIME (ON MEDIUM)

### CHUCK

Boneless Eye Chuck Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	9–11 minutes 12–15 minutes
Shoulder Top Blade Steak (Flat Iron)	8 ounces	11–14 minutes
Shoulder Center Steak (Ranch)	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	8–11 minutes 12–15 minutes
Under Blade Center Steak (Denver Cut, boneless)	$\frac{1}{2}$ inch (8 ounces)	3–4 minutes on medium-high
Blade Steak	1 inch	13–17 minutes
Boneless Shoulder Top Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch	11–13 minutes
Shoulder Petite Medium Medallions	$\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ inch	4–6 minutes on medium-high

### RIB

Rib-Eye Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	8–11 minutes 12–15 minutes
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### LOIN

Porterhouse/T-Bone Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	10–13 minutes 14–17 minutes
Boneless Top Loin Strip Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	8–11 minutes 12–15 minutes
Tenderloin Steak	$\frac{1}{2}$ inch $\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	3–5 minutes on medium-high 7–10 minutes 10–13 minutes

### SIRLOIN

Boneless Top Sirloin Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	12–15 minutes 15–18 minutes
Tri-Tip Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	9–12 minutes 10–13 minutes

### ROUND (Nolan recommends cooking steaks from the round section to medium-rare, 145°F.)

Round Sirloin Tip Center Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	11–13 minutes 14–15 minutes
Round Sirloin Tip Side Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	11–13 minutes 13–15 minutes
Bottom Round Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	11–14 minutes 16–22 minutes
Top Round Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	12–15 minutes 15–17 minutes
Eye of Round Steak	$\frac{3}{4}$ inch 1 inch	8–10 minutes 11–13 minutes

# BROILING

## THICKNESSWEIGHT

## DISTANCE FROM HEAT

## COOKING TIME

### CHUCK

Shoulder Top Blade Steak (Flat Iron)	8 ounces	3–4 inches	15–20 minutes
Boneless Shoulder Steak	¾ inch	2–3 inches	10–13 minutes
	1 inch	3–4 inches	16–21 minutes

### RIB

Rib Steak, small end	¾ inch	2–3 inches	9–12 minutes
Rib-Eye Steak	¾ inch	2–3 inches	8–10 minutes
	1 inch	3–4 inches	14–18 minutes

### LOIN

Porterhouse/T-Bone Steak	¾ inch	2–3 inches	10–13 minutes
	1 inch	3–4 inches	15–20 minutes
Boneless Top Loin Steak	¾ inch	2–3 inches	9–12 minutes
Strip Steak	1 inch	3–4 inches	13–17 minutes
Tenderloin Steak	1 inch	2–3 inches	13–16 minutes

### SIRLOIN

Boneless Top Sirloin Steak	¾ inch	2–3 inches	9–11 minutes
	1 inch	3–4 inches	16–21 minutes
	1½ inches	3–4 inches	26–31 minutes
	2 inches	3–4 inches	34–39 minutes

### ROUND (Nolan recommends cooking steaks from the round section to medium-rare, 145°F.)

Top Round Steak	¾ inch	2–3 inches	12–13 minutes
	1 inch	2–3 inches	17–18 minutes
	1½ inches	3–4 inches	27–29 minutes
Bottom Round Steak	1¼ inches	3–4 inches	18–20 minutes

### FLANK

Flank Steak	1½–2 pounds	2–3 inches	13–18 minutes
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Source: National Cattlemen's Beef Association

# BRAISING

THICKNESS/WEIGHT | COOKING TIME (COVERED, OVER LOW HEAT)

## CHUCK

Chuck Pot Roast	2½–4 pounds	2–3 hours
Boneless Shoulder Steak	¾–1 inch	1¼–2 hours
Short Ribs	2 by 2 by 4 inches	1½–2½ hours

## ROUND

Bottom Round Rump Roast (boneless)	3–4 pounds	2½–3¼ hours
Eye of Round Steak (boneless)	¾–1 inch 1–1½ inches	1¼–2 hours 2–2½ hours

## BRISKET

Fresh Brisket	2½–3½ pounds	2½–3 hours
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Source: National Cattlemen's Beef Association

# BUYING BEEF

The quality of the U.S. meat supply is regulated by the government. It is, in fact, the most highly regulated industry of its kind in the world, and all beef products must pass stringent inspections before being sold to the consumer.

The meat-grading program, for instance, is controlled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Beef grades reflect qualities such as tenderness and flavor, and these grades act as a guide to help you make intelligent choices about what you want to buy and how much money you want to spend. You'll find three grades of beef to choose from, and in the final analysis the decision is a matter of taste—for example, not everyone wants the kind of marbling that allows beef to be graded as USDA Prime. Here are the three grades and some explanation of how these grades are earned.

**USDA Prime:** This grade has the most marbling of fat and is sold to specialty meat markets and high-end restaurants such as Del Frisco's and Bob's Steak & Chop House in Fort Worth, Texas—among my personal favorites. USDA Prime is considered the best quality, but many people don't necessarily look for marbling of fat in their steak.

**USDA Choice:** Choice has less marbling than Prime, but is still a quality product. This is the beef you will find most easily in your local grocery store.

**USDA Select:** The least amount of marbling provides a leaner product, but with a little less flavor than Choice and Prime.

## The Aging Process

The goal in aging beef is to tenderize it, particularly in loin and rib cuts. Most of the tenderization occurs in the first seven to ten days of the aging process, as this is when the natural enzymes in the beef break down the connective tissue in the fibers of the muscle. Dry and wet are the two techniques used to age beef.

**Dry Aging:** The beef is placed, uncovered, for up to twenty-eight days under refrigeration (32°F to 34°F) and in a humidity-controlled environment. Dry aging, though more expensive than wet aging, yields a rich and deep brown-roasted flavor to the meat.

**Wet Aging:** Wet aging improves tenderization and minimizes spoilage. The beef is aged in airtight sealed bags for up to twenty-one days under refrigeration (32°F to 34°F).

## How to Decide What to Buy

The label will tell you what kind of meat it is, the wholesale cut, and the name of the cut. The label will also give you the weight, price per pound, total price, handling instructions, and the deadline for selling the beef to the consumer. In some cases, the label will also include preparation guidelines and the USDA grade. As for ground beef, the label will also indicate the lean-to-fat ratio (80 percent lean to 20 percent fat, for example) and the cut (sirloin, chuck, or round).

## DETERMINING DONENESS

There is a surefire method for cooking your beef perfectly: I recommend that you buy both an instant-read thermometer and an oven-safe meat thermometer to guarantee that all your hard work and effort pay off with the best-tasting beef you have ever cooked.

**Steaks:** When cooking steaks (at least ½ inch thick), insert your instant-read thermometer horizontally from the side—it should penetrate the center part of the steak, not touching fat or bone. Here are the temperatures you're looking for, depending on the level of doneness you enjoy:

**Medium-rare: 145°F**

**Medium: 160°F**

**Well-done: 170°F**

**Roasts:** Insert an oven-safe meat thermometer into the thickest part of the roast just prior to roasting, and leave it in for the entire roasting process. Or, if you are using an instant-read meat thermometer, insert it into the thickest part of the roast when you think the roast is done, and leave it in for 15 seconds (see the "Braising" chart on [here](#) for temperature guidelines).

**Ground Beef:** Insert an instant-read thermometer into the center of a ground beef patty, meatballs, or a meatloaf. All ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F (medium doneness).

## DEFROSTING & STORAGE GUIDELINES

Always defrost frozen beef in the refrigerator—never at room temperature. Place a plate under the meat to avoid making a

mess. Use this chart as your blueprint for perfect timing.

#### DEFROSTING GUIDELINES

BEEF CUT	THICKNESS	REFRIGERATION TIME (35°F TO 40°F)
Steaks, Ground Beef	½–¾ inch	12 hours
Kabobs/Skewers	1–1½ inches	24 hours
Small Roasts, Thin Pot Roasts	Variable	3–5 hours per pound
Large Roasts, Thick Pot Roasts	Variable	4–7 hours per pound

#### FREEZER & REFRIGERATOR STORAGE GUIDELINES (from purchase date)

FRESH BEEF CUT	FREEZER (0°F OR BELOW)	REFRIGERATOR (35°F TO 40°F)
Roasts, Steaks	6 to 12 months	3 to 4 days
Kabobs/Skewers	6 to 12 months	2 to 3 days
Ground Beef	3 to 4 months	1 to 2 days





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