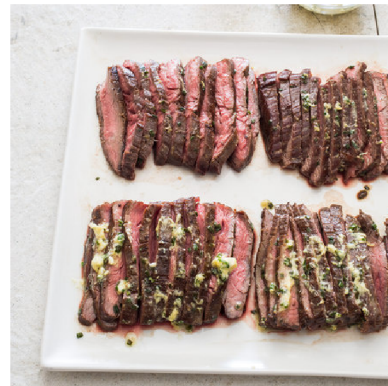


Pan-Seared Flank Steak with Mustard-Chive Butter

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WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

Flank steak is too long to fit in most skillets, and it's quite thin, so it often overcooks before the exterior is well browned. The long muscle fibers tend to contract when seared, causing the steak to buckle and resist browning, and flank steak is thicker at one end, so it has a tendency to cook unevenly. We wanted an indoor cooking method that would produce a juicy, well-browned flank steak that was cooked to medium throughout.



We cut the flank into four steaks that would fit neatly in the skillet, but we didn't put them there right away. Instead, we sprinkled them with salt for seasoning and sugar for browning and baked them in a very low oven until they had reached 120 degrees. Then we seared them in a hot skillet to develop the crust. We flipped the steaks three times, instead of just once, to equalize the contraction of the muscle fibers on each side, which discouraged buckling. After enriching the lean steaks with a flavorful compound butter, we sliced them thinly against the grain for maximum tenderness.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (1½- to 1¾-pound) flank steak, trimmed
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

INSTRUCTIONS

Open the oven as infrequently as possible in step 1. If the meat is not yet up to temperature, wait at least 5 minutes before taking its temperature again. Slice the steak as thin as possible against the grain.

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 225 degrees. Pat steak dry with paper towels. Cut steak in half lengthwise. Cut each piece in half crosswise to create 4 steaks. Combine salt, sugar, and pepper in small bowl. Sprinkle half of salt mixture on 1 side of steaks and press gently to adhere. Flip steaks and repeat with remaining salt mixture. Place steaks on wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet; transfer sheet to oven. Cook until thermometer inserted through side into center of thickest steak registers 120 degrees, 30 to 40

SERVES 4 TO 6

½ teaspoon grated lemon zest
plus 1 teaspoon juice

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

minutes.

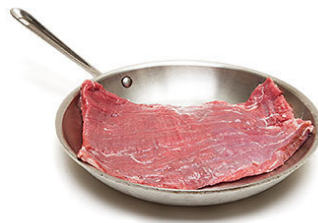
2. Meanwhile, combine butter, 1 tablespoon chives, mustard, and lemon zest and juice in small bowl.

3. Heat oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Sear steaks, flipping every 1 minute, until brown crust forms on both sides, 4 minutes total. (Do not move steaks between flips.) Return steaks to wire rack and let rest for 10 minutes.

4. Transfer steaks to cutting board with grain running from left to right. Spread 1 ½ teaspoons butter mixture on top of each steak. Slice steak as thin as possible against grain. Transfer sliced steak to warm platter, dot with remaining butter mixture, sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons chives, and serve.

Fitting a Rectangle into a Circle

Squeezing a long flank steak into a 12-inch skillet usually means that the ends of the steak creep up the sloped sides of the pan, all but guaranteeing unevenly cooked meat. Cutting our flank steak into four pieces and warming it in the oven before searing (where it shrinks significantly) helps it fit neatly. Smaller pieces also have shorter muscle fibers, so the steaks don't buckle as much during searing.



TIGHT SQUEEZE: A 1 ½-pound flank steak is simply too big for a 12-inch skillet.

Science: Getting Thick and Thin Ends More Evenly Cooked

Our usual method for cooking steaks is to preheat them in a 275-degree oven and then transfer them to the stovetop to sear their outsides. But when we adapted this technique to flank steak, we ran into a problem: By the time the thick end of the steak reached the target temperature of 120 degrees, the thin end overcooked. The solution? Turn down the oven: At 225 degrees, both the thick and thin ends

stay within an acceptable temperature range.

Here's why: The increase in the internal temperature of the steaks is not constant over the course of their time in the oven. Initially, the steaks heat up pretty rapidly, and then they slow as their internal temperature approaches that of the oven. But here's the interesting thing: The rate at which the temperature of the thin steaks and the thick steaks slows is different because their mass is different. The thin steaks heat more quickly, but their rate of increase starts to level off as it approaches the target temperature of 120 degrees. That gives the thicker steaks time to catch up. The lower the oven temperature, the more pronounced this leveling off effect is.

275° OVEN: Thin end is overdone by the time thick end is fully cooked.

225° OVEN: Thick and thin ends are both at acceptable temperatures.