

Food



By Malcolm R. Hébert

No matter how you slice it, steak is man's favorite meat. Americans still eat more beef than any nation in the world. And yet, more steaks are often ruined because of improper cooking.

There are three basic methods of cooking steak:

1. Grilling over high heat with charcoal or oak wood.
2. Broiling directly under a heat source.
3. Sauteeing or pan broiling in a skillet on top of the range.

When grilling a steak you can always tell the degree of doneness by the juices that appear on the top of the steak. When the juices first start to appear, the steak is rare. When the juices have appeared, settle and hold on the surface of the steak, the meat is medium. And when the juices start to recede into the steak, the meat is well done.

When broiling a steak, always pre-heat the broiler. Many ovens have a small red cycling light which indicates when the unit has reached the broiling stage. The broiling rack should be three to four inches below the heat source.

To cook your steak rare, broil the meat four to five minutes per side; medium, six to eight minutes per side and for well done, eight plus minutes per side.

Sauteeing is a French method of cooking a steak in a skillet. "Pan broiling" is the American version of sauteeing. Sauteeing steak is always done over very high heat. This seals the meat and retains the juices. After searing the meat, lower the temperature so the meat cooks evenly. To test for doneness, use your index finger and press down on top of the meat. If it feels soft it is rare, medium hard is medium and if hard to the touch, the steak is well done. Never cut the steak open to peek to see if it is the way you like it for the juices all escape and the meat will taste tough.

There is a Swedish method of sauteeing steak. You heat the skillet very, very hot. Add 1 tablespoon of salt to the pan and cook the meat until it reaches the stage you like. The steak literally cooks on the salt.

No matter how steak is prepared, once in a while a good marinade is needed to add new flavors to the steak. One of the major ingredients in any marinade is California brandy.

Brandy, once called the original refrigerator because of its preservative powers, is an excellent tenderizer for meat. You don't need a lot, as seen in the recipe below.

Steak Marinade

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| 2 cups red wine | 1 medium onion, diced |
| 1/2 cup California brandy | 1 medium carrot, diced |
| Juice from 1 lemon | Large pinch thyme |
| 2 cloves garlic, crushed | Large pinch oregano |

Mix all ingredients together. Marinate the steak, turning every 1/2 hour for two hours. Cook steak as desired. Yield: 2 1/2 cups marinade.

Another feature of California brandy is its use in making a quick, delicious sauce for steak. This can be done when sauteeing a steak. After the steak is finished, deglaze the pan with 1/4 cup California brandy, heating it to the sizzle. Ignite it and cook until the flame dies out. Add 1/4 cup beef stock and reduce to half. Pour over the steak.

America is becoming a banana republic. Last year we ate 23 pounds of bananas per person. Next year we will probably jump to consuming an incredible 16 billion pounds of bananas. The banana is America's most popular fruit.

If the banana is becoming a national obsession, it is, happily, a magnificent one. Bananas contain vitamins A, B and C, plus loads of iron and potassium. Nutritionists recommend them for infants, since they aid gastrointestinal disorders. Doctors recommend them to adults on low-sodium and low-fat diets. The banana is 99.8% fat free and has only 100 calories. They are the ideal fruit for older people because they are easy to digest and are a good laxative.

Originally, the fruit came to us from Malaysia. Arab traders brought them to the shores of Africa, and then in the middle of the 15th century, the Portuguese took bananas to the Canary Islands, where banana plantations bloomed. But it wasn't until the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia that Americans got their first taste of a banana. The bananas were foil wrapped and sold for 10 cents each, which was an extraordinary sum in those days. Twenty years later, the U.S. was consuming almost one billion pounds a year.

Bananas are always picked green, since they ripen best when off the tree. And most Americans, say the experts, like their bananas with a touch of green on them.

There are three stages of ripeness. The first is the banana with a touch of green; the second is light yellow; and the third is yellow with dark brown flecks on it. Most people prefer the first two stages, but banana lovers know that the brown-flecked banana is the sweetest.

Here is a special banana and brandy recipe that will go over big the next time you entertain your friends.

Flaming Bananas

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| 6 ripe bananas, peeled and sliced lengthwise | 1 cup brown sugar |
| Juice of 1/2 lemon | 3 dashes of cinnamon |
| 1/4 cup butter | 1/4 cup California brandy |
| | Ice cream of your choice |

Brush bananas with lemon juice. Melt butter in a small saucepan and add sugar and cinnamon. Mix well and cook 2 minutes. Add the bananas and turn them once. Heat the brandy to the sizzle, pour over the mixture and ignite. When the flame dies, serve two pieces of banana with a single scoop of ice cream and spoon a little sauce over each serving. Serves 6.

Cool Summer Delight



Here's a perfect addition to a summer buffet or luncheon. Chicken Olive Mousse — a delightful blend of chicken and vegetables accented with the unique crunch of California ripe olives. Easy to make ahead, this savory molded salad will soon become a firm favorite at your table.

Low Calorie Orange Drink



When the lazy, hazy days of summer drag right into fall, be sure to include cool, refreshing drinks on entertaining menus.

A particular favorite is The Great Summer Orange Drink that you can make quickly and easily with orange juice and skim milk. And great it is . . . great flavor and low in calories! Thanks to diet sweeteners, we can have sweetness with 185 less calories per serving.

The Great Summer Orange Drink

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| 1 6 oz. can frozen orange juice | 16 teaspoons (8 packets) SugarTwin |
| 6 ounces water | 1 teaspoon vanilla |
| 1 cup skim milk | 1 1/2 cups chipped ice |

Place all ingredients except ice in blender. Blend for 1 minute. Add ice. Blend at highest speed for 2 minutes. Serve in tall glasses with mint leaf on top.

Makes: 4 servings
91 calories/serving
185 calories saved/serving

Peaches, pineapple, and bananas, too, are the basis for additional low calorie drink recipes available by sending 25 cents in coin (postage and handling) to: SugarTwin Drink Booklet, Consumer Relations Dept., Alberto-Culver Co., 2525 Armitage, Melrose Park, IL 60160.

Nutritious Catfish

If you are watching your weight and exercising to maintain good health, include farm-raised catfish in your menu plans. The recipe below was developed in the Test Kitchens of Country Skillet and will add delightful variety to any nutritious meal.

Pecan-Capped Catfish

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| 1 1/2 pounds Country Skillet Catfish fillets | 2 tablespoons yellow cornmeal |
| 1/4 cup ground pecans or other nuts | 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted |

In small bowl, combine pecans, cornmeal and butter; set aside. On greased broiler rack, arrange fillets skinned side up. Broil 6 inches from heat 4 minutes. Turn fish over. Sprinkle pecan mixture on top of catfish. Broil 2 minutes or until fish is flaky. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Chicken Olive Mousse

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| 1 cup pitted California ripe olives | Dash cayenne |
| 2 envelopes unflavored gelatin | 3 tablespoons white wine vinegar |
| 1/4 cup cold water | 1 cup heavy cream |
| 1 cup chicken broth | 2 tablespoons chopped green onion |
| 1 cup milk | 2 tablespoons chopped pimiento |
| 2 egg yolks, lightly beaten | 2 tablespoons chopped green pepper |
| 1 teaspoon prepared mustard | 2 cups diced cooked chicken |
| 3/4 teaspoon salt | Ripe olives and cherry tomatoes for garnish |
| 1/8 teaspoon white pepper | |

Chop ripe olives. Soften gelatin in cold water. Heat chicken broth. Add gelatin and stir until dissolved. Add milk, egg yolks, mustard, salt, pepper and cayenne to dissolved gelatin. Cook over hot water, stirring frequently, for about 10 minutes, until slightly thickened. Remove from heat. Stir in vinegar. Cool until mixture begins to thicken. Whip cream until soft peaks form. Fold into gelatin mixture. Stir in onion, pimiento, green pepper, chicken and chopped olives. Spoon into 6-cup mold. Chill for several hours or overnight. Unmold, and garnish with ripe olives and cherry tomatoes.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

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