

How not to ruin that pricy piece of meat in the holiday meal

By Katie Workman
The Associated Press

Nothing says “celebration” like a ridiculously expensive piece of meat. Well, that’s not really true, but this is the time of year for splurging, in dollars and eating.

And with apologies to all the vegetarians out there, few things are as impressive an anchor to a festive meal than an extravagant cut of meat.

But boy, those prices can get up there, especially now that many consumers are trying to eat more responsibly by buying meat that is grass-fed, pasture-raised, and ethically handled. A recent jaunt around some markets in New York City revealed 100% grass-fed, local beef Chateaubriand roast for \$59.99 per pound; pasture-raised, local Frenched rack of lamb for \$39.99 per pound; and, on the website of a price club, an A5 Kobe beef sirloin roast sells for \$2,000 for an eight-pound piece of meat.

Even if you’re buying a more traditionally produced piece of meat, you still might be paying \$29.99 per pound for a filet mignon beef roast or \$18 per pound for a standing rib roast.

So, you do *not* want to mess this up.

It can be nerve-wracking cooking a piece of meat on which you spent a small fortune. Some tips from the experts:

The cooking method

For expensive, large cuts of meat, roasting is usually the answer. The dry heat method caramelizes the exterior and allows for even cooking throughout.

“We use classic roasting techniques, i.e. no sous vide or other New Age methods,” says Michael Lomonaco, who knows his way around pricey cuts of meat as chef and partner of Porter House Bar and Grill in New York.

Don’t complicate things during the



holidays, he adds; he opts for a timeless prime rib.

Fat is your friend when it comes to splurge cuts of meat. That’s why Antimo DiMeo, executive chef of Bardea Food and Drink in Wilmington, Delaware, also likes prime rib for the holidays.

“It provides a lot of great fat marbling that responds well to slow roasting,” he says.

Lomonaco suggests placing the roast fat side up so the fat bastes the meat as it cooks. Pick a cut with a generous amount of fat, and ask your butcher to help you pick the choicest one.

Bring the meat to room temperature

Bring the meat to room temperature, that way the outside won’t cook too quickly while the inside is still losing its chill.

Cooking temperature

Some people sear the meat first, some cook it slow and steady, some switch from high to low heat during roasting. Find a recipe from a reliable source and follow it

precisely. And make sure the oven is fully preheated before you put the meat in.

Two important points:

First, use a meat thermometer. It’s really the only way to make sure you’re removing your meat from the oven at exactly the right moment. Insert the internal thermometer into the meat’s thickest point, making sure it’s not touching any bone. There are a variety of internal thermometers available, from ones you can check remotely to instant-read versions.

Second, allow for carryover cooking. Almost all foods continue to cook after they have been removed from direct heat, and the internal temperature will continue to rise. If you want your roast, whether beef or lamb, to be rare or medium rare, which would be an internal temperature of 125° to 130° Fahrenheit, then take it out of the oven when the internal temperature reaches 120° F. This is also true for other cuts such as steaks and rack of lamb.

TASTY TIPS. For expensive, large cuts of meat, roasting is usually the best cooking option. Pictured is prime rib cooked to a perfect medium rare. (Cheyenne Cohen/Katie Workman via AP)

Lomonaco likes to roast his prime rib at 350° F. DiMeo sears his first in a very hot (500° F) oven to give it a nicely browned crust, and then lowers the heat to 350° F and cooks it low and slow for two to three hours (depending on size), basting often to keep it moist and tender. Both chefs pull the meat from the oven when its internal temperature reaches 120° F.

Let the meat rest before cutting

There are two reasons to let the meat sit after cooking. First, for carryover cooking. Second, because the fibers of the protein change while the meat is cooking, and need to relax post-cooking in order to reabsorb the juices. If you’ve ever cut open a leg of lamb or a steak to see perfectly rosy meat and lovely juices, only to have the meat turn tough and grayer a bit later, that’s because you cut into it too early. The juices ran out of the meat onto the cutting board. So be patient.

For a prime rib, for example, Lomonaco says it’s crucial to let it rest for 30 minutes before carving. Smaller cuts of meat don’t need to sit as long — maybe 10 minutes for a 1½-inch-thick steak. Legs of lamb should also sit for 20 to 30 minutes.

So, while paying for the holiday table’s meat might make you gasp, you should breathe easily when serving it up, perfectly cooked, to admiring family and friends.

Katie Workman writes regularly about food for The Associated Press. She has written two cookbooks focused on family-friendly cooking, Dinner Solved! and The Mom 100 Cookbook. Recipes for some showy cuts of meat — such as Lemon-Garlic Semi-Boneless Leg of Lamb, Filet Mignon with Roasted Brussels Sprouts and Lemon-Herb Mayo, and Marinated Petit Filets — are available online at <www.themom100.com>.

HOLIDAY EVENTS & SHOWS

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(1119 SW Park Ave, Portland). Enjoy or volunteer at a free Christmas dinner. The meal — featuring turkey with all the trimmings — is available to anyone in need or alone this holiday. The event, which takes place on Park Avenue between S.W. Main & Madison Streets, includes jazz musicians playing dinner music, free phone calls to loved ones, photos with Santa, and gifts. Pet food and kennels are available during the meal. Potluck in the Park also serves a free meal to anyone in need at 3:00pm every Sunday of the year, rain or shine, at its winter site located at Tom McCall Waterfront Park on S.W. Naito Parkway in Portland (under the Hawthorne Bridge ramp). For info, to arrange transportation, or to make a donation, call (503) 255-7611 or visit <www.potluckinthepark.org>.

Kwanzaa celebration

Dec 28, 11am-1pm, North Portland Library (512 N Killingsworth St, Portland). Learn about the seven principles of Kwanzaa at a family event celebrating the third principle, *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility). For info, call (503) 988-5123 or visit <events.multcolib.org>.

New Year’s at noon

Dec 31, 11am-2pm, Portland Children’s Museum (4015 SW Canyon Rd, Portland). Young people are invited to ring in the New Year hours before the grownups with festive noisemakers, multiple countdowns, a dance party, art activities, a glow-in-the-dark fun room, a musical performance, and more. For info, call (503) 223-6500 or visit <www.portlandcm.org>.

New Year’s Eve sangha event

Dec 31, 7pm-midnight, Dharma Rain Zen Center (8500 NE Siskiyou St, Portland). Attend a New Year’s Eve celebration, a sangha event featuring a vegetarian potluck (7:00pm), sacred dancing (8:30-9:00pm), 108 tolls of the bell (10:30pm), a New Year’s ceremony (11:40pm), and more. Attendees participating in dinner are asked to bring a vegetarian dish to share. For info, call (503) 894-8891 or visit <www.zendust.org>.

“NYE 2020”

Dec 31, 8pm-2am, Hawthorne Theatre (1507 SE César Chávez Blvd, Portland). Attend “NYE 2020,” a New Year party for persons age 21 and older featuring DJ Prashant and special guests. For info, call (971) 344-2022 or visit <www.bollywoodpdx.com>.

DJ Anjali & The Incredible Kid New Year

Dec 31, 9pm-1:30am, Polaris Hall (635 N Killingsworth Ct, Portland). Ring in the New Year with DJ Anjali and The Incredible Kid, who drop the latest electronic sounds emerging from South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Jamaica, and the U.K. The event is for persons age 21 and older. For info, call (503) 281-3918 or visit <www.anjaliandthekid.com>.

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