

Cooking Essentials and How to Cook a Roast

You can tell a lot about a woman by the way she handles 3 things: microwaves, hormones, and water retention; also by her answer to the question, “Name the 3 things you can’t live without when you cook?”

If your list starts with Hamburger Helper, then bless your heart.

Here’s my list: Kitchen Bouquet, Jane’s Crazy Salt, and good quality meat. OK, throw in lemon juice. Add a sharp knife (do not throw the knife). So that’s five. Microwaves are good but not essential, unless I’m reheating a meal saved in the refrigerator, or preparing Mac n Cheese in those little ready to nuke cups for my kindergarten grandson, or reheating my coffee that went cold before I could finish it because I was fixing Mac n Cheese for my grandson. Ok, I take it back. Make microwaves number 6, and while I’m thinking about it, a properly calibrated oven for roasting and baking. We’re up to 7 now, you say. Fine so be it. Wait. A reliable, oven-safe digital meat thermometer!

That is my list and I’ll stand by it: **My ~~Three Five Six Seven~~ Eight Essentials for Cooking**. If I decide to throw another one or two in, (I’m sorely tempted. Pots and pans? Equipment? Utensils? Where does it stop?) I’ll let you know, and I’ll stand by that list, too.

Meanwhile, here’s my recipe for how to cook a roast, proven over decades of Christmas dinners and special occasions. You can ask my dinner guests, especially my brother who, I swear, travels all the way from DC every Christmas just so he can steal the first piece of deliciously unctuous, crispy crackling off the roast before Christmas dinner. I’ve even been known to give the recipe, tied with a bow onto a new roasting pan, as wedding gifts.

This is the best roast ever. Your efforts will be rewarded. And you can do this for any special occasion, not just holidays. Say, my birthday. Or yours. Tell me what time you’re serving, and I’ll be there. (Also, if we’re still social distancing, I can sit on your porch outside if necessary, and vice versa).

HOW TO COOK A (STANDING RIB) ROAST

Ingredients:

- 1 bodacious prime beef “standing rib” roast: An expensive cut of meat. They do go on sale. And they freeze. Yes, there are other cuts of beef for roasts, and they are swell for certain things, but this one is our family’s traditional, dee-luxe, holiday/special occasion roast.

Tell the butcher you want him to cut you a fresh standing rib roast. To make carving easier, tell him to cut the chine bone and he will wrap it back up for you with string like new, in a nice package for roasting. Get it at least 3 ribs thick or else why bother? You want leftovers for sandwiches. You know the dogs will want the bones. Take note of the weight of your roast.

- Kitchen Bouquet Browning & Seasoning Sauce (look for it in a 4 oz brown bottle where you find the A-1). No substitutes. Please, I beg you.
- Original Mixed-Up Salt from Jane’s Crazy Mixed Up Seasonings (look for it in the herbs and spices aisle). Again, it’s a proprietary ingredient. No substitutes or I won’t be responsible for the outcome).
- Garlic powder or garlic salt, your choice
- Parsley flakes (fresh it makes you feel better, but dried is fine. Seriously, dried parsley is so déclassé, I know, but it works. Plus, at Christmas, good luck marching out to the parsley bed and finding anything worth using. Publix is always an option.)

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 450° (yes 450. I’ll explain in a minute).
2. Let the roast sit out on the counter for 15-20 minutes to get the chill off. Roasting time will be more accurate this way. Just be sure the big dogs aren’t around.
3. Unwrap the roast and give it a rinse under the faucet. Dry it off and put the roast, **FAT SIDE UP** on a rack sprayed with Pam in a roasting pan sprayed with same.
4. Slather Kitchen Bouquet all over top, bottom, and sides of the roast with your hands. Messy but totally important. This will seal in the juices. You will have to

- wash your hands and the bottle of Kitchen Bouquet when you're done, but trust me, it's worth the mess.
5. Sprinkle the Krazy Salt liberally all over the roast and by liberally, I mean more than you would expect to be appropriate. Cover all the surfaces well.
 6. Sprinkle the garlic powder or garlic salt the same way.
 7. Sprinkle the parsley flakes, using a lighter hand. Still, don't skimp.
 8. Pat that roast all over with your hands to get all the sprinkled goodness well-stuck (not an official culinary term). Messy again, so you'll need to wash your hands again.
 9. Put about ¼ - ½ cup water in the bottom of the pan just to keep the pan from smoking til you get fat drippings going.
 10. Put the whole thing in your preheated 450° oven. This high temp will help seal in the juices, but you must leave it at this high setting only briefly or you'll have smoking, expensive black coal for dinner. **DON'T LEAVE. JUST STAND THERE AND HAVE A SIP (OR TWO) OF WINE. TURN THE HEAT DOWN TO 350° AFTER 5 MINUTES!**
 11. Cook beef at 350° for 15-20 minutes per pound for a beautiful medium-rare prime rib (internal temp 140). Always estimate cooking time on the early side if you don't have an oven-safe meat thermometer. You can use your analog thermometer to check periodically, and sometimes you might need another few minutes. Watch it like a hawk.
 12. For the love of Elvis, don't overcook it. That would be a mortal sin.

NOTE: In emergencies, you can actually cook a roast like this from a frozen state. I don't recommend it, but it can be done. Just add some cooking time. You will certainly want to use the meat thermometer later on as it cooks. Be prepared to possibly double the cooking time. Still, 140 internal temp is your goal. Guessing can be difficult, and the anxiety just isn't any fun.

When the roast is done, remove it from the oven and let it sit on the rack for at least 10-15 minutes before messing with it. This is called “letting the meat rest.” I think it’s good for the cook to rest during this time, too, if possible. Time for another glass of wine and one last bite of hors d’oeuvres. You will also want to stand near the roast to guard it from marauders who are after their first greedy pull of crackling off your masterpiece.

Then, remove the roast to a carving board, carve some thick, juicy slices, and enjoy.

GRILLING: This can be done on a grill if you don’t want to heat up your kitchen in the summer. Make sure the grill has a heat calibration system, and controllable heat areas. You’ll do everything the same in a pan on a rack except cook it over the “cool” side of the grill (it’s not actually cool, it just means it’s the side that isn’t over the grill’s direct flame).

ALSO: Pork Roast can be done exactly the same, except sprinkle and rub lots of Dill Weed into the roast in addition. Cook pork for 30 minutes per pound. Use your meat thermometer, too.