

Guidance for roasting beef

Most of us who are worried about roasting joints are only so because of lack of experience – how many of us roast a joint of beef for say 8, 10 or even 12 people regularly?

The first question is whether to buy a joint on the bone, or one that is boned and rolled. A joint on the bone, will have more flavour than a boned one, but the latter will be simpler to carve. However, if you have a sirloin or rib of beef, you can take the meat completely off the bone – once it is cooked and rested – and this will make it easier to carve even slices. A good sharp carving knife, together with a long pronged fork, are essential for the task.

It is always preferable to buy a piece of meat a little larger than you need. A large joint will cook better than a small one and, of course, cold roast beef the following day is well worth having and is truly delicious.

If you choose beef on the bone, you will need to order sirloin or rib roast and allow around 340 grams per person – i.e. 2.7kgs for 8 people, 3.4kgs for 10 etc. For a boneless joint, you may choose from rolled sirloin, rolled rib or topside and should allow 225 grams per person – i.e. 1.8kgs for 8 people, 2.3kgs for 10 etc.

Cooking Method

Take the meat out of the fridge at least an hour before you want to put in the oven. Preheat the oven to gas mark 9, 240°C, or use the roasting oven if you have an Aga.

Slice up an onion and place in the roasting tray and lay the meat on top. Brush the surface of the meat with a little oil. Season with salt and pepper and sprinkle with a little dried thyme. Place in the oven and roast for 20 minutes before turning the heat down to gas mark 5, 190°C, or place it in the next coolest of the Aga ovens and continue to cook for 10 minutes for every 450g. If you like your beef rare, take it out of the oven now. If you prefer medium rare, leave it for another 15 minutes, and if well done is your choice, leave it another 30 minutes. Baste the meat 2 or 3 times during the cooking time.



Approximately 30 minutes before the end of the cooking time pour about half a bottle of red wine into the roasting tin. This will help dissolve some of the sticky bits on the base of the pan, will stop the onion from charring and give the base to a delicious gravy.

When you finally take the meat out of the oven, remove it from the roasting tin and place it on a warmed serving dish, cover loosely with foil and put in a warm place to allow it to rest for half an hour. This will allow the meat to relax as it cools a little, the juices to settle into the meat, and will ensure easier carving. It also allows you to cook the Yorkshire puddings (of which no-one should be deprived) and make the all-important gravy.

To make the gravy, pour all the juices and fat into a saucepan – scraping every last little morsel – and letting it settle for a minute or two before either spooning or pouring off most of the fat. Bring the contents of the pan to the boil and add more wine if much has evaporated.

Continue to boil and add a pint of vegetable water or stock. In a small bowl, slake a tablespoonful of cornflour with enough cold water to give a pouring consistency, and whilst stirring vigorously pour it in a steady stream into the boiling liquid. If it seems thick enough before all the cornflour is used, then stop. Taste and season. Add a dessert spoonful of redcurrant jelly if it does not seem sweet enough, and a glass of Madeira if you have it. Strain it through a sieve back into the pan, and leave it to bubble gently while you dish up the vegetables, check the Yorkshires, and have a well deserved glass of wine.

By the way – have you remembered the horseradish sauce?



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