

Prime Rib

Gather Your Ingredients

1 (7-pound) first-cut beef standing rib roast (3 bones), meat removed from bones, bones reserved
Kosher salt and ground black pepper
2 teaspoons vegetable oil

Before You Begin

Look for a roast with an untrimmed fat cap (ideally ½ inch thick). We prefer the flavor and texture of prime-grade beef, but choice grade will work as well. To remove the bones from the roast, use a sharp knife and run it down the length of the bones, following the contours as closely as possible until the meat is separated. Monitoring the roast with a meat-probe thermometer is best. If you use an instant-read thermometer, open the oven door as little as possible and remove the roast from the oven while taking its temperature. If the roast has not reached the correct temperature in the time range specified in step 3, heat the oven to 200 degrees, wait for 5 minutes, then shut it off, and continue to cook the roast until it reaches the desired temperature.

Instructions:

1. Using sharp knife, cut slits in surface layer of fat, spaced 1 inch apart, in crosshatch pattern, being careful to cut down to, but not into, meat. Rub 2 tablespoons salt over entire roast and into slits. Place meat back on bones (to save space in refrigerator), transfer to large plate, and refrigerate, uncovered, at least 24 hours and up to 96 hours.
2. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. Heat oil in 12-inch skillet over high heat until just smoking. Sear sides and top of roast (reserving bone) until browned, 6 to 8 minutes total (do not sear side where roast was cut from bone). Place meat back on ribs, so bones fit where they were cut, and let cool for 10 minutes; tie meat to bones with 2 lengths of twine between ribs. Transfer roast, fat side up, to wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet and season with pepper. Roast until meat registers 110 degrees, 3 to 4 hours.
3. Turn off oven; leave roast in oven, opening door as little as possible, until meat registers about 120 degrees for rare or about 125 degrees for medium-rare, 30 to 75 minutes longer.
4. Remove roast from oven (leave roast on baking sheet), tent loosely with aluminum foil, and let rest for at least 30 minutes and up to 75 minutes.
5. Adjust oven rack about 8 inches from broiler element and heat broiler. Remove foil from roast, form into 3-inch ball, and place under ribs to elevate fat cap. Broil until top of roast is well browned and crisp, 2 to 8 minutes.
6. Transfer roast to carving board; cut twine and remove roast from ribs. Slice meat into ¾-inch-thick slices. Season with coarse salt to taste, and serve.

A Guide to Prime Rib

If you're going to splurge on this premium cut, make sure you're cooking it right. Our guidelines will steer you toward perfection.

This holiday favorite is far too expensive to settle for dry, gray meat and a pale exterior. With this guide you will learn all about prime rib including how to shop for it; how to prep it; and how to ensure a deeply browned, substantial crust encasing a tender, juicy, rosy-pink center. Plus, we'll tell you how to heat up any delicious leftovers without ruining them.

A cow has 13 ribs per side. Butchers refer to these ribs in ascending order from the front of the animal to the back. The first five ribs (1 through 5) are in the chuck section, the next seven (6 through 12) are the rib section, and the 13th is part of the loin. **Ribs 6 through 12 are sold as prime rib.**

How to Shop for Prime Rib

A whole seven-rib roast can weigh between 14 and 22 pounds, so butchers often divide the roast into two smaller roasts called the first cut and the second cut. Whichever cut you buy, **count on 1 pound per person.**

Our Favorite: The First Cut

The more desirable of the two cuts, which is closer to the loin, consists of ribs 10 through 12. This cut is more desirable because it contains the large, single rib-eye muscle, which is uniform and tender.

Alternate names: Loin end, small end

Our Second Choice: The Second Cut

This cut, consisting of ribs 6 to 9, is closer to the chuck end, which also means it's made up of a mosaic of different muscles that don't look as uniform and attractive when sliced. This cut also contains more connective tissue than a first-cut roast. Still, it's an excellent roast that some cooks prefer since it contains more fatty pockets than the first cut, and fat adds flavor.

Alternate name: Large end

Prime Grade versus Choice Grade

Prime is the highest quality grade that the U.S. Department of Agriculture assigns to beef available to consumers. It indicates that the meat is heavily marbled with intramuscular fat (10 to 13 percent), which refers to the streaks of white fat between muscle fibers and which make it particularly flavorful and tender.

Choice, the second-highest grade of beef, is the grade issued to moderately marbled meat.

Prime-grade prime rib is a premium-quality roast often sold at high-end markets and butchers. Not surprisingly, we've found it more tender and flavorful than choice-grade prime rib, and [we think it's worth the high price tag](#)—about 25 percent more than choice prime rib.

What Is Marbling?

Marbling refers to the desirable streaks of intramuscular fat in the lean muscle and is a primary factor when determining beef's grade. The fat streaks are solid when cold but melt during cooking, enhancing the perception of juiciness and providing mouth-coating lubricity, which makes the meat seem more tender. Heat also causes the fatty acids to oxidize and form new flavor compounds that improve the flavor of meat and make it taste more complex.

How to Prepare Prime Rib

To ready your prime rib for cooking, you'll need to remove the bones to better season the meat, score the fat so it renders more easily, and season the roast liberally with [kosher salt](#).

Step 1: Cut Meat from Bones

While ribs help protect meat from overcooking and are great for gnawing on, they inhibit the seasoning and carving of the meat beneath them. To get around this, we cut them off the meat before seasoning it and [tie them back on](#) before roasting. We remove them again before carving.

Step 2: Score Fat Cap

The thick fat cap insulates the meat as it cooks and crisps when exposed to high heat. Scoring (making shallow cross-hatched cuts down to, but not into, the meat) helps any seasonings penetrate the meat and encourages rendering.

Step 3: Season Liberally and Early

Salt seasons and tenderizes the meat and helps it retain moisture during cooking. Given enough time and exposure to air in the refrigerator, salt also helps to dry out the meat's surface so that it will brown deeply. We prefer kosher salt, since the larger grains are easier to distribute evenly than the finer grains of table salt.

Guidelines for salting: For a 7-pound, 3-rib roast, rub 2 tablespoons of kosher salt over the roast, including the side where the bones were removed and into fat cap slits, and refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 24 hours or up to 4 days. (Salting for longer than four days risks desiccating the exterior unless the roast is wrapped in plastic wrap.)

How to Cook Prime Rib

Steakhouses use extreme measures to produce prime rib with well-browned, substantial crust and rosy, juicy meat from edge to edge—for example, roasting the meat at 180 degrees for most of a day and then blasting the exterior under a high-powered broiler or with a blowtorch.

Our simpler method for [Best Prime Rib](#) produces equally good results:

- **Salt the roast and refrigerate it uncovered for at least a day.** The salt seasons the meat and enhances the beefy flavor while dissolving some of the proteins, yielding a buttery-tender roast. The salt and exposure to air (for at least one day but up to four) together also dry out its exterior for better browning.

- **Cook the roast at a very low temperature.** To further enhance tenderness, we cook our prime rib at 200 degrees for 3 to 4 hours, or until it reaches 110 degrees, then cut the heat.
- **Leave the roast in the turned-off oven.** We do this until it reaches 120 degrees (for rare) or about 125 degrees (for medium-rare). Holding the roast between 110 and 120 degrees accelerates the activity of enzymes in the meat that act as natural tenderizers, breaking down its tough connective tissue.
- **Broil the crust.** A brief stint under the broiler before serving and after resting ensures a crisp, flavorful crust.

Best Prime Rib

Top chefs say 18 hours in a 120-degree oven is the route to prime rib perfection. What if we told you it was possible in almost one-third the time?

How to Carve Prime Rib

Prime rib is relatively easy to carve, once the bones have been removed. Carve only as many slices as you need. Leaving the rest of the roast intact will help it stay warm and retain flavorful juices.

- Cut twine and remove roast from ribs.
- Carve into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick slices and season with coarse sea salt.

How to Reheat Prime Rib Leftovers

The key to reheating a roast is to fully warm it without drying out its exterior or cooking it beyond its original degree of doneness.

- Heat roast, uncovered, on wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet on middle rack in 250-degree oven until meat registers 120 degrees (1 to 1½ hours). Pat surface of roast dry with paper towels.
- Sear roast on all sides in hot, oiled skillet, 1 to 1½ minutes per side. (Do not sear cut ends.)