

This article from Cook's Illustrated is a detailed overview on Prime Rib, including how to roast it and even reheat leftovers. Be aware that Cook's Illustrated periodically changes their recommendations on how to roast Prime Rib. This article is dated Nov 13, 2023.

This generally is how I cook Prime Rib, which I do on special occasions. I will mention that the best thing I ever did was to buy one of those Instant Read meat thermometers where you keep the probe inside the roast while roasting it; the probe is connected via a thin metal wire to a display outside the oven. The display can be set to sound an alarm when a specified temperature is reached, which makes it incredibly easy to ensure you don't overcook the roast. The display also shows the current temperature of the roast which helps decide when to start side dishes. One note - the temperature rises quite fast once the roast reaches around 180 - 190 deg,

A Guide to Prime Rib

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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.

What Is Prime Rib?

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.**



Senior Editor Lan Lam breaks down a rib section into first and second-cut prime rib roasts.

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.

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.

Two Essential Carving Tools

These items make carving prime rib a breeze.



Carving Board

Carving boards are designed to avoid messy juices dribbling onto the counter, traditionally by relying on a trench around their perimeter that traps the liquid.



Carving Knife

Unlike shorter chef's knives and pointed, flexible carving knives, slicing knives are long and straight for smooth, even slicing. They have rounded tips so as to be less threatening for tableside serving.

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.)