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## God of the Grill

Nick Massie tells you how to prepare the perfect steak over an open flame.

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By Nick Massie

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All images: Nick Massie

It's possible that nothing more closely ties us to our Paleolithic ancestors than cooking over an open flame. Ever since tongues of fire licked the first piece of meat, we have craved to indulge again and again. Through the years, we have improved on the practices of our primal forefathers in many ways, but meat cooked over an open flame has remained virtually unchanged.

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*A simple recipe for Massie's "secret sauce."*

As summer rolls around and we fire up the grill, it's time to take a look at one of the simplest and tastiest of culinary delights: the grilled steak. In this article, I'll teach you how to grill a restaurant-quality steak that will impress your friends and make you the envy of the neighborhood.

Simplicity, I believe, is the key ingredient in food preparation, and this certainly holds true for grilling a steak. I've provided four guidelines and one basic recipe that will turn you from a grilling greenhorn to a guru in no time flat:

1. Temper your meat—Allow your meat 30 to 60 minutes at room temperature before grilling. This ensures even cooking by preventing temperature shock from the drastic temperatures of the refrigerator and the 500-plus F of the grate on your grill. If you consider that you need to bring a refrigerated steak from 40 degrees to 125 degrees for medium rare, you are doing 35 percent of the work by bringing it to a room temperature of 70 degrees before grilling.
2. Make sure your grill is hot—I use an infrared thermometer, which registers between 500 and 800 F, depending on the power of the particular grill I am using. There are other factors that will affect the amount of time a steak takes to cook—namely, the under-grate structure—but a hot grate is important to get a good sear. The sear provides the highly desired grill marks and flavorful caramelization.
3. Use a coarse ground salt—I prefer kosher salt when grilling. It's available in most supermarkets, and it's cheap. You can use sea salt, Himalayan crystal, Hawaiian, etc. But please do yourself, and your steak, a favor: don't use iodized salt.
4. Use grill juice—What? What's grill juice? Halt not hither . . .

### Secret (Simple) Sauce

Ah, the grill juice.

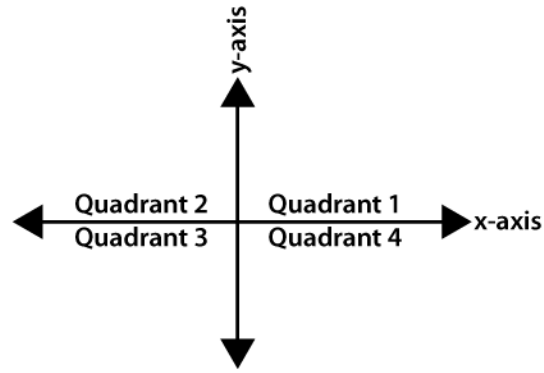
This recipe consists of three ingredients, for which we will use the acronym SOW. The ingredients are soy sauce, olive oil and Worcestershire sauce, which are used in a 3:2:1 ratio. So, if you can remember SOW and 3:2:1 and can match the numbers with the letters, you've memorized the recipe. We do this sort of thing a lot in CrossFit, so I'm confident that you can handle it.

For four steaks or less, I use 3 ounces of soy sauce, 2 ounces of olive oil and 1 ounce of Worcestershire sauce. However, it is efficient to make a large batch of this every couple of months. The large batch acts as a “grill-juice well” from which you can fill your “grill-juice bucket” when necessary.

I recommend using a baker’s brush to apply the grill juice. You can use a silicone brush, but, due to the high quantity of oil, the silicone repels the juice and the effort becomes silly. A baker’s brush holds the juice like a paintbrush holds paint; just keep in mind that the bristles will melt.

### Grilling Instructions for a Medium-Rare, One-Inch-Thick Ribeye

1. Temper the meat by pulling it from the refrigerator 30 to 60 minutes before grilling. Place paper towels below and on top of the steaks to wick away any excess moisture.
2. Preheat the grill.
3. Prepare the mise en place: salt, olive-oil spray, grill juice, brush, tongs and a plate.
4. Head to the grill.
5. Remove the paper towels from the steak and season the top side with salt. Hold the salt 18 to 24 inches above the steak, as this will give the most even spread. I like salt, so I use a liberal amount. Keep in mind that soy and Worcestershire sauces are both high in sodium. At this point, only season one side of the steak.
6. Clean the grates of the grill, spray the seasoned side of the steak with olive-oil spray, and place the seasoned side down on the grill at a 22.5-degree angle. The goal is to make a diamond-shaped grill mark, which is achieved through this angle. If you go 45 degrees, the marks will be square, and if you offset them from the rectangular or square shape of the steak, they will appear to be diamonds even though they are not. A 22.5-degree angle is “prescribed”; any other angle is “scaled.”
7. Cook for 1 minute to allow the salt to adhere through searing, then brush the back side of the steak with grill juice two times. For this, I use a combination of a dab and a stroke. You want the brush to absorb some of the soy and Worcestershire, when all that it wants to do is soak up the oil and leave the S and W behind. So, make sure to get some S and W involved.
8. Cook for 1 more minute after brushing with grill juice. This will give us our first grill mark in 2 minutes and two brushes of SOW. Then, pick up the steak with the tongs and move it to a different, hot section of the grill on the opposite 22.5-degree angle. Think of the algebraic quadrants: you started in Quadrant 1 (upper right), with the steak pointing 22.5 degrees to the right of the Y-axis. Now, you are going to point the steak 22.5 degrees to the left of the Y-axis, which will put you in Quadrant 2 (upper left).
9. Again, brush the top of the steak with grill juice and allow it to cook here for 2 more minutes. You can brush the steak every minute on the minute (EMOM) from this point forward.
10. When 1:45 has elapsed, salt the top of the steak and prepare to flip it over. At 2 minutes, flip the steak, placing salted side down on a 22.5-degree angle on a new, hot area of the grill. This is where you will see your beautiful diamond-shaped grill marks, which will be enhanced with the application of the grill juice. You are a seasoned pro at this point, applying the juice EMOM.
11. When 2 minutes have elapsed, think quadrants and make your move. That’s right: 22.5 degrees on a new, hot area, and get that brush going.
12. After the final two grill-juice applications and the final 2 minutes, remove the steak from the grill and place it on the plate.
13. Allow the steak to rest for 5 to 10 minutes, during which time you can apply a little more grill juice if you’d like. Then serve it up!



### Where math and steak collide: the formula for perfect diamond-shaped grill marks.

Make a note of the doneness and adjust the time for future grilling sessions accordingly. I could explain how to know doneness by touch, but practice is best for learning this skill. I've seen attempts to teach this through touching the palm of your hand, the tip of your nose, your forehead, earlobe ... the list goes on. Again, the tenderness of these body parts varies and, when I was learning, these methods didn't work for me. What do I recommend? Practice. Grill a thousand steaks and you'll figure it out.

So, with the onset of summer, let your culinary juices flow, plan a Paleo potluck and fire up your grill. I know Carl the Caveman didn't have grill juice, but if he had, I'm certain he would have preferred his steaks prepared in the above manner. And, just as the members of his cave cohort would have envied him, follow the above instructions and you'll soon be the talk of your block.

Let me know what you think of this preparation in the comments section of this article.



**Perfection.**



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### About the Author

Nick Massie has earned his living as a cook for the past 17 years and has been involved in CrossFit since 2008. He runs a website, [PaleoNick.com](http://PaleoNick.com), where his mission is to combat the obesity epidemic, fuel firebreathers and help people "keep it Paleo." After struggling with nutrition for nearly four years, Nick hopes to help CrossFitters by sharing his experiences and acting as their guide to culinary fitness. Nick holds a CrossFit Level 1 Certificate, with CrossFit certificates in Basic Barbell, Gymnastics, Kettlebell, Movement and Mobility, Rowing, Olympic Weightlifting, and CrossFit Kids. He also holds a USAW Club Coach Certificate. Nick currently lives in Moorhead, Minn., with his wife, Jessica, and their two boys, Samson and Jonas. He is a trainer at Wild Knights CrossFit.