

RIB STEAK WITH GARLIC POTATOES COOKED IN DUCK FAT

by Christopher Lee

For Fontaine's delicious Réserve La Demoiselle, I'd choose a thick, juicy steak grilled over fruitwood (apple or cherry), and grapevine cuttings would be a wild dream. In a pinch, a well-heated heavy cast-iron pan will also do the steak justice. Choose a steak with a minimum of three weeks of dry age, 2½ inches thick, 2 to 2½ pounds. Dry aged beef will typically be grain-finished, but I've come to like grass-fed beef, too. However, it has to be of a certain age. Cattle must reach maturity to develop the full flavor and rich fat essential to a good steak. If you're serving grass-fed, ask your butcher for beef from an animal that has been raised to at least twenty-four months. Serve the steak with boiled creamer potatoes cut in half, fried in duck fat, and then—after tipping off the excess duck fat—tossed with garlic, finely chopped parsley, and a small pat of butter. Tuck some spicy watercress dressed with olive oil and red wine vinegar onto the side of the plate.

6–8 sprigs fresh thyme leaves (about 2 tablespoons leaves)	1½ tablespoons sea salt
2–2½-pound boneless rib eye steak	1 whole garlic clove, cut in half
1½ tablespoons grapeseed or mild olive oil	2 ounces unsalted butter
	2 teaspoons freshly ground pepper

With your fingers, strip thyme leaves from stems, leaving leaves whole. Rub steak with oil and thyme leaves. Cover and marinate for several hours, either in or out of the fridge. If grilling steak over wood, let wood burn down to a thick bed of glowing embers, and spread them evenly over the bottom of the grill. Fire should be medium-hot. Position grill about 8 inches above the coals. Let grill heat for 10 minutes before placing meat on grill. If using cast-iron, heat pan to hot before placing steak in pan, then turn down to low-medium.

Turn steak in oil, sprinkle with 2 teaspoons sea salt, and lay in pan. Brown steak on first side, about 4 minutes, and then turn steak every 4 minutes to reach an even doneness throughout the meat and to well-browned on its outside. Total cooking time will be 20–25 minutes. Use a meat thermometer to test for doneness; 120° F internal temperature will yield a medium-rare steak. Take temperature in several places to get an accurate reading. Rub a heated serving plate vigorously with cut garlic clove. Place steak on plate and butter on top of steak. Grind lots of black pepper over steak. Rest 10 minutes and slice ½ inch thick at table.

Serves 4



Christopher Lee is a former head chef of Chez Panisse and Eccolo restaurants in Berkeley and co-founder of Pop-Up General Store in Oakland. Visit his website: oldfashionedbutcher.com.