



Sizzling good steaks

In his search for the perfect steak, **BOB HART** goes to the experts for advice

IT'S not the holy grail, exactly. But the eternal search for the perfect steak is, for some, a quest of comparable significance. The steak in question must first be in impeccable condition, and your cut of preference: in my case, rump.

And it must be either grass or grain fed — for me, grass — and have been dry-aged, on the bone, for a decent length of time: four weeks at the very least for me.

And all of that's before we even begin to get serious about how we like it cooked.

There is much more, in fact, to the perfect steak than simply the protein, just as the search for the holy grail was never really about the goblet.

The meat must be flawless. But so, too, must the cooking, seasoning and/or sauces.

Cooking a steak is complicated because, if the top chefs from whom we sought guidance for this report are an indication, there is no single, infallible way to go about it.

There was a time when chefs were instructed to position the steak on a blistering-hot grill until the first side was cooked to the customer's specifications, then to turn it — just once. And to season it, on both sides, only when the meat was sealed.

But life is no longer that simple. When we asked the professionals, we discovered there is no "right" way to cook steak, but lots of them.

Gifted meat chef Adrian Richardson, from North Carlton's La Luna bistro, insists you should turn a steak often to retain moisture. But the modern Scott Dickett, from The Point

And when we consulted two of our most celebrated chefs — Neil Perry from Rockpool Grill and Guillaume Brahimi from Bistro Guillaume — their approaches were different again.

Seasoning a steak is debated as intensely as cooking methods. The traditional approach is to apply salt and freshly ground pepper only after the meat is sealed.

But now, more chefs season steak before they cook it, some salt it at least twice, some insist on an olive oil rub, and Melbourne steak guru Vlado Gregurek, from Vlado's steak pit in Richmond, does not season it at all.

So, who's right? Actually, they're all right. So read on, and make up your own mind, but remember: few things on earth compare with a perfect steak, impeccably cooked, served with an impeccable bernaise and a red wine of distinction.

And when you find it, you have found the holy grail. With bells on.

» neil perry



Rockpool Grill, Crown Complex PERRY, perhaps Australia's most

recognisable chef, really knows his stuff.

In the restaurant, you will find steaks under "beef from the wood-fired grill", cooked over wood, rather than coals or charcoal.

The one to try is his mighty, 500g Greenham's dry-aged, grass-fed T-bone of yearling beef. Here's how he cooks it:

T-bones should be medium-rare, rather than

rare, to take care of all the connective tissue, and should be taken from the fridge at least two hours before cooking. Salt them, and coat thinly with good EV olive oil.

Place on the grill and cook to the point you require: for medium-rare that will be six or seven minutes a side. Get a nice crust on the steak and turn it once.

Once cooked, salt it again and rest in a warm oven, or on the rack over your grill, under loosely tented foil, for as long as you have cooked it.

Serve the steak with a drizzle of olive oil and a squeeze of lemon.

» home-cooked



Bob Hart; steak from Jonathan's, Collingwood FOR those who know their way around their kitchen and Melbourne's

butchers, the best steak will probably be the one they cook for themselves.

We put this to the test by visiting Jonathan's, the acclaimed

we sought guidance from master butcher Joe Mittica, who selected the steak he regards as the best money can buy: a 480g porterhouse that had been dry-aged for four weeks. It cost \$16.

Mittica has a clear idea of how the perfect steak should be prepared, and here is how he goes



Bring the steak to room temperature and place in a hot pan or on a ribbed grill. It will need to cook for about six minutes a side, and it should be turned only once.

Salt the steak only as each side is sealed: so turn it a second time to season the second side, then remove it immediately from the heat. Rest, in a warm place under tented foil, for at least five minutes. And that's it.