

Guru at the grill

A seasoned butcher shares advice for perfect summer steaks

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Chef, schmef. Who understands steak better than the butcher?

To kick off the grilling season, we enlisted Lou Kreitzman, owner of the 21-year-old Prime Time Butcher in Woodbury and third-generation scion of a meat-wholesaling family. Not only has Kreitzman been selling meat his whole adult life, he's been explaining to his customers how to cook it. We spent an afternoon with Kreitzman at his Great Neck home and took notes while he grilled five steaks and shared expert advice.

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Lou Kreitzman of Prime Time Butcher in Woodbury grills a variety of steaks in his Great Neck backyard.



YVONNE ALBINOWSKI

A butcher's favorite steaks

HANGER

Until recently, the hanger steak had few fans in this country. (The Japanese and French knew better.) "My father could never sell them," Kreitzman recalled. "He'd bring them home for us — that's how they got the nickname 'butcher's tenderloin.'" The hanger is just as beefy and sweet as the skirt steak but is a little more tender. For our barbecue, Kreitzman grilled a hanger steak that had been treated to a few hours in a mixture of extra-virgin olive oil and fresh herbs. If you like your steak well done, the hanger steak will retain a lot of its appeal.

PORTERHOUSE

The famous steakhouse steak is made up of two distinct cuts separated by a t-shaped bone: The larger cut, flavorful but somewhat fibrous, is variously referred to as strip steak, New York strip, Kansas City steak, club steak, shell steak, top loin steak. The smaller cut is the filet, incomparably tender but lacking in flavor. T-bone steaks (which, on the steer, are just adjacent to the porterhouses) have a smaller filet. "If you're willing to spend the money to buy a good prime steak, you can't do better than a porterhouse," Kreitzman said.



SKIRT

This thin, fibrous steak has a strong beefy flavor that can stand up to marinades. At Prime Time Butcher, Kreitzman sells them marinated in his own barbecue sauce. (He also likes this Asian marinade: Combine 1 cup hoisin sauce, 1/4 cup prepared barbecue sauce, 1 tablespoon minced garlic and 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger.) Skirt steaks are so thin, they are easy to overcook. Cook them with the grill cover open, and don't let them rest long before eating.



FLAT IRON

Kreitzman explained that "London broil" is not a cut of steak. It refers to any large, boneless cut that you slice (always across the grain) to serve. Most markets' London broils are from the top round, a singularly tough and bland cut of meat. Kreitzman is a big fan of the flat-iron steak, cut from the chuck (shoulder), which has a great flavor and texture.



RIB EYE

The rib eye is simply a standing rib roast that's been cut into steaks. Kreitzman prefers bone-in to boneless rib eyes. "The bone adds flavor and makes the steak cook more evenly," he said. "And, best of all, it's great to gnaw on." Rib eyes have "sweet, rich-tasting" meat and "even a choice steak will have good flavor." If you want an impressive steak and don't have access to prime, go for the rib eye.

