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Your Ultimate Meat Sous Vide Guide

by [Omaha Steaks](#) | Last updated Dec 29, 2023



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What is Sous Vide Cooking?

It may sound complicated, but there's no reason to be intimidated by sous vide cooking! French for "under vacuum," the sous vide cooking method is actually quite simple and doesn't require a lot of effort on your part: all you need is a sous vide immersion cooker and a pot of water! This technique utilizes a temperature-controlled water bath and longer cooking time to cook food slowly and evenly, so when you sous vide steak (and a variety of other meats and foods), every part is cooked to the exact same doneness for restaurant-quality results every time.

How Does a Sous Vide Work?

If you're wondering how to sous vide steak (or any other meat), the answer couldn't be any easier! Simply put, sous vide cooking is accomplished by sealing food in an airtight container (typically a bag) and cooking it in a temperature-controlled water bath. That's where the immersion cooker comes in. This handy little device attaches to your pot, basin, or other water vessel and uses a heated metal coil to warm and maintain the temperature of the water consistently for gradual, controlled cooking, and constantly circulates the water to ensure even distribution to all parts of your food.

Because this method of cooking is contactless, certain meats (especially steak) should be finished by pan-searing (or broiling) them briefly to create a delicious crust and make them more visually appealing, as they may be an unappetizing shade of gray when removed from the bath and bag.

What Are the Benefits of Sous Vide Cooking?

As long as you're not looking for a quick meal, the benefits of sous vide cooking are limitless!

- **Never Overcook Meat Again:** When you sous vide, you enjoy an unparalleled level of control when it comes to doneness. Once your meat has reached your preferred temperature, it will remain that temperature until you're ready to eat!
- **Transform Inexpensive Cuts:** If you're craving a great steak between Omaha Steaks orders, sous vide cooking an inexpensive, lower-quality cut will enhance its tenderness and flavor for a next-level experience that tastes like a million bucks – but won't cost it!
- **Decrease Cooking Injuries:** When it comes to cooking in an oven, on a stove, or on a grill, there's always the potential to burn yourself. By using the sous vide method, your risk of injuring yourself on a hot surface decreases dramatically as long as you use caution when handling the heated water.
- **Cook Healthier Meals:** Sous vide cooking your meat is a simple way to retain more nutrients and vitamins and requires less oil, fat, and salt than other methods of cooking, creating a healthier dining experience without sacrificing flavor.
- **Sous Vide Anywhere:** Unlike traditional cooking methods, all you need to sous vide is an outlet! You don't have to worry about uncovering the grill or monopolizing the oven or stovetop space you need to prepare sides and a dessert when you sous vide dinner.
- **Enjoy Hands-Off Cooking:** Set it and forget it with sous vide cooking. Once you've prepped your meat and turned on your immersion cooker, your job is over until it's time to sear! Now you're free to prepare the rest of your meal without dividing your attention – or to simply relax and wait for dinnertime.

What Can You Sous Vide?

Steak may be one of the most popular things to sous vide, but this method of cooking can be applied to a wide range of foods, including:

- Beef Roast
- Pork Roast
- Chicken
- Eggs
- Pork Chops
- Pulled Pork
- Sausage
- Short Ribs
- Duck
- Shrimp
- Lobster
- Salmon

- Asparagus
- Carrots
- Potatoes
- And so much more!

Your Step-By-Step Meat Sous Vide Guide

Step One: Set Up Your Immersion Cooker – Attach your immersion cooker to your water-filled vessel, taking care to ensure the water level is between the “minimum” and “maximum” fill line etched into the cooker.

Step Two: Prep Your Meat – Even if your meat is already in a vacuum-sealed bag, we highly recommend transferring it to another bag long enough for the resealable portion to remain out of the water while your meat is completely submerged. Sous vide cooking often takes hours, and even the best vacuum-sealed bag will eventually take on water over time.

Instead, we recommend the “water immersion method.” To use this method, seal your bag 75% of the way, place your meat in the water, squeeze out any remaining air pockets, and seal the remainder of the way. Alternatively, if you fall in love with sous vide cooking, an at-home vacuum sealer is absolutely a worthwhile investment! Whichever method you use, the final step will be to clip the top of the bag to your vessel to ensure the bag’s opening is never submerged while keeping your meat fully submerged. You don’t need to purchase a fancy clip to execute this method, a binder or hair clip will work just as well. You may also need to weigh your meat down so it doesn’t float above the water line, which will result in uneven cooking.

Transferring your meat also gives you the opportunity to season it with salt and pepper or another seasoning of your choosing and to add butter, garlic cloves, and/or your choice of fresh herbs to the bag prior to cooking for greater flavor.

Step Three: Set Your Immersion Cooker – Set the cooking time and temperature of your immersion cooker based on your desired doneness according to the cooking chart below. Some immersion cookers have apps to control time and temperature and monitor cooking progress. The actual cook time won’t begin until the water is brought up to temperature, which typically takes around 15 minutes, so make sure to factor that extra time in when planning a meal.

Step Four: Post-Cooking Tips – Finish your meat to perfection with these helpful tips:

Dry the Meat Off. This step is vital. If your meat has moisture on it, pat it extra dry with paper towels. The goal is to remove as much moisture as possible, which will allow your meat to get that crispy-brown crust quickly. Any additional amount of time your meat is being seared may result in overcooking your previously perfectly cooked food!

Season Well and Rest. Season your meat with salt and pepper and rest at room temperature for several minutes, allowing any additional moisture to evaporate.

Pan-Sear or Broil Your Meat.

Pan-Sear:

1. Preheat your pan on high heat to create a super-hot surface before adding your meat. Water should instantly sizzle when it comes into contact.
2. Add 2 teaspoons of high-smoke-point oil to the pan. Once the oil starts to lightly smoke, add the meat and sear for no more than 30-45 seconds per side to achieve a crispy brown crust.
3. For even greater flavor, add unsalted butter and some fresh herbs of your choice to the pan, and carefully spoon the melted butter over your meat.

Broil:

1. Preheat your broiler to high.
2. Lightly brush the meat with melted butter, season well with salt and pepper, and place on the center rack of the oven.
3. Broil for 2 minutes on each side or until you’ve achieved your desired crust.

Sous Vide Cooking Time and Temperature Quick Reference Chart

Sous vide cooking is unlike any other cooking method you’ve used before. Unlike grill, oven, and stovetop cooking, the sous vide method requires more time and patience – but we promise it’s worth it! Whether you’re cooking tender steak, savory pork, juicy chicken, or mouthwatering vegetables, this time and temperature quick reference chart is your cheat sheet to achieving next-level perfection.



Your Ultimate Sous Vide Guide



Steak

MEDIUM-RARE

129°F

45m

– MAX TIME: 1-4H –

Chicken Breast

JUICY & SOFT

145°F

1h 30m

– MAX TIME: 3-4H –

FIRM

155°F

1h

– MAX TIME: 4H –

Pork Chops

SLIGHTLY PINK & JUICY

135°F

1h

– MAX TIME: 3-4H –

JUICY & WHITE

148°F

1h

– MAX TIME: 4H –

Fish/Salmon

FLAKY & TENDER

125°F

25m

– MAX TIME: 45M –

Skin-On Sockeye

FLAKY & FIRM

135°F

30m
- MAX TIME: 1H -

Prime Rib

MEDIUM-RARE

132°F

6h
- MAX TIME: 12H -

Boneless Short Ribs

TENDER & JUICY

165°F

8h
- MAX TIME: 12H -

Baby Back Ribs

PULL-APART TENDER

165°F

4h
- MAX TIME: 6H -

Chicken Thighs

JUICY & TENDER

165°F

1h 30m
- MAX TIME: 4H -

FALL-APART TENDER

165°F

4h
- MAX TIME: 6H -

Burger

MEDIUM-RARE

130°F

45m
- MAX TIME: 2-3H -

MEDIUM

135-140°F

50m
- MAX TIME: 3-4H -

For a different desired doneness, see chart below.

Sous Vide Instructions

- Attach an immersion cooker to any water-filled pot and place protein in original vacuum-sealed packaging or sealable bag.
- Set time and temperature on your immersion cooker using our cooking charts and desired doneness.
- Remove from bag, season, and sear in a hot pan 1-2 minutes per side.
- Allow protein to rest for 5 minutes before enjoying!



Steak Doneness Guide



Rare – 120 F

The steak has cool-to-warm red center and soft, tender texture. This is an excellent choice for leaner steaks like top sirloin or filet mignon that don't have as much fat to melt.

Medium-Rare – 130 F

The steak will have a warm red center – the perfect steak texture with a nice brown crust. Cooking to medium-rare allows the fat (marbling in the steak) to render and add buttery, rich flavors to your steak. This is the ideal doneness for a juicy, flavorful steak.

Medium – 140 F

The steak will have a hot pink center and slightly firmer texture. The longer cooker time will make your steak slightly drier and the bite less tender.

Medium-Well – 150 F

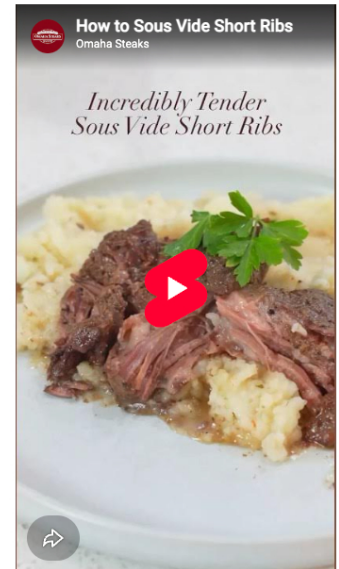
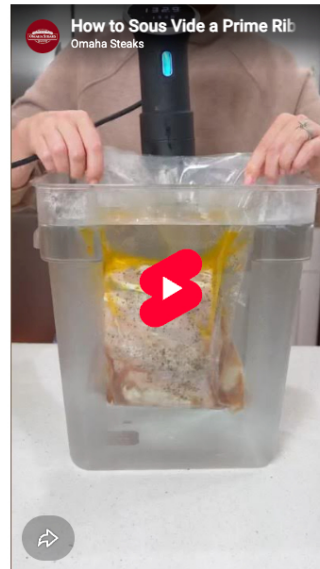
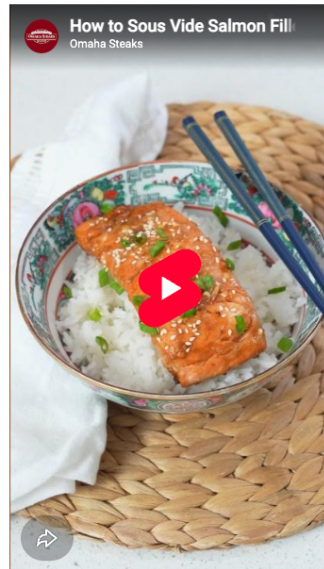
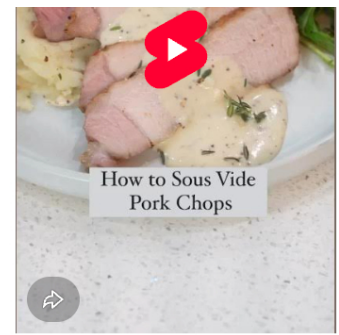
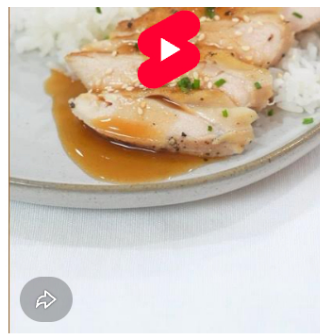
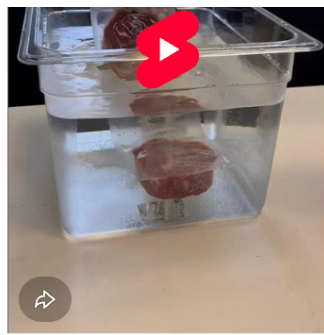
The steak will have a mostly brown center and firm texture. The meat will be drier, as water evaporates during the cooking process.

Well-Done – 160+ F

The steak will have no color left and will be very firm and much drier. The meat loses fat and moisture as it cooks, resulting in a dry, tougher texture. We don't recommend cooking to this doneness.

Watch our sous vide video series, created by [Couple in the Kitchen](#), with step-by-step instructions for cooking your favorite proteins, including steak, chicken, pork chops, salmon fillets, prime rib roast, and short ribs.





Sous Vide Cook Equipment

With the rising popularity of at-home sous vide cooking, there is no shortage of immersion cookers and sous vide bag options for a range of budgets on the market, but in order to get the best results from this method, you need the best equipment.

How to Choose the Right Sous Vide Machine

- **Determine How Much Power You Need:** While one of the greatest differentiators among sous vide machines is their power output, that has no effect on how fast your food cooks – it does, however, affect how quickly your water heats up and how fast the temperature recovers when large food items are added to the bath. This spec matters more to cooks who often prepare large roasts and other big cuts of meat.
- **Decide How Important WiFi and/or Bluetooth Connectivity Is to You:** There are a variety of sous vide machines that are only operational via smart devices and a dedicated app, many that only feature physical controls, and a number that offer both options. This comes down to convenience and personal preference. While machines that operate via apps may be more appealing to the tech lovers in the kitchen and tend to feature helpful cooking guides and recipes, others may prefer a more hands-on approach that won't be affected in the event you have poor internet service.
- **Check Out the Accessories:** Some sous vide machines come with a container specifically to act as your water bath; some come with sous vide bags; some come with clamps to keep a bag's seal above water; some come with all; and some come with none! Considering you can use any pot as a vessel, any standard resealable bag, and a common hair or binder clip, this will likely be the least important factor in your decision.

The 5 Best Sous Vide Machines

- Anova Culinary Sous Vide Precision Cooker 2.0
- Breville the Joule® Turbo Sous Vide Machine
- Instant® Accu Slim™ Sous Vide Immersion Circulator, V2
- Anova Culinary Sous Vide Precision Cooker Nano
- Breville The HydroPro™

The 5 Best At-Home Vacuum Sealers

- Anova Culinary Precision Vacuum Sealer Pro
- Nesco Deluxe Food VS-12 Vacuum Sealer
- Anova Culinary ANVS01-US00 Anova Precision Vacuum Sealer
- Mueller Austria Vacuum Sealer Machine
- FoodSaver FS2160 Multi-Use Handheld Vacuum Sealer And Marinator

How to Choose the Right Sous Vide Bag

- **Disposable vs. Reusable:** Disposable bags are less expensive initially but must be replaced with each cook, whereas reusable bags can be used multiple times. If you're planning on being a casual sous vide chef, disposable bags are a great alternative, but constant cooks should consider the benefits of reusable bags.
- **Shape Preference:** Bags typically come in three shapes: rectangular, round, and oval. Rectangular bags are generally easier to clean if you're going the reusable route and hold the most food. Round and oval bags are similar and a good choice for steaks and chicken breasts, with oval bags being slightly wider than round ones.
- **Material Options:** Sous vide bags are most commonly plastic, silicone, polyester, or nylon. Plastic bags are usually less expensive and easier to clean; silicone bags are more expensive but extremely durable; polyester bags are tear-resistant and sturdy; and nylon bags are flexible and lightweight.
- **Temperature Durability:** While all sous vide bags are capable of remaining durable in temperatures between -14°F and 140°F, some are specifically designed to work more effectively in lower or higher temperatures. If you plan on cooking outside of that range, make sure you have the proper bag for the job.

Troubleshooting Sous Vide Cooking

As with any other cooking method, sous vide cooking can be confusing at first. But don't worry, we're here with the solutions you need to achieve the best sous vide cooking experience possible when encountering these common problems!

Problem: Concerned that the temperature reading may not be accurate.

Solution: This is an especially big concern for newbie sous vide users, but sometimes quality control issues happen, and you want to ensure your food is safe to eat. The easiest way to confirm temperature accuracy is to use a tip-sensitive digital thermometer and compare it to the readout on your immersion cooker.

Problem: Sous vide cooking two or more bags and can't keep them separated.

Solution: Because immersion cookers circulate the water, you can't separate the bags with anything that is 100% solid and will prohibit proper circulation. Many sous vide enthusiasts invest in a quality stainless steel rack, which can cost as little as \$7 to purchase.

Problem: Bags keep floating to the surface and will not stay submerged.

Solution: For both taste and safety, your meats must always remain below the water line. If yours are floating, they need to be weighed down, either inside the bag itself or in your water vessel. If you're weighing them down in the water, anything that can withstand your cooking temperature can be used; if you're weighing down inside the bag, make sure to only use food-grade material that won't compromise your safety, like a spoon or butter knife.

Problem: Vacuum sealer will not completely seal sous vide bag.

Solution: This is common when it comes to wet ingredients, especially sauce and marinade, so it's beneficial to invest in a vacuum sealer that is approved for liquids. If that's not an option, you can fill your bag, fold the top over, secure it with a clip, freeze it for 30-60 minutes (or however long it takes for the liquid to solidify), and then vacuum-seal it.

Problem: Water evaporates during sous vide cooking that lasts over 24 hours.

Solution: There are two ways to decrease evaporation during long-term cooking: adding sous vide water balls, which are made from food-grade material and invented specifically for this purpose, or simply adding a lid to your water vessel.

Sous Vide FAQs

Question: What is the point of sous vide cooking?

Answer: The number one benefit of sous vide cooking is the control you have over the doneness of your food, especially meats. When used properly, you will never under or overcook a meal again! Additionally, sous vide cooking cooks meats in their own juices, enhancing flavor and tenderness significantly; there is far less "shrinkage" of larger meats like roasts than other cooking methods; and thanks to its "set it and forget it" nature, you can spend that downtime prepping and cooking the other components of your meal or even leaving the house for long periods of time while it cooks.

Question: What are the disadvantages of sous vide cooking?

Answer: The biggest downside of sous vide cooking is time. Some people may wonder why they would wait 3 hours for a steak to cook instead of less than 10 minutes on the grill or the stovetop and lament the lack of flexibility needed to cook a last-minute meal quickly. Again, this comes down to personal preference and does require planning your meal around the cook time. Other disadvantages of sous vide cooking include issues with food bags floating and health concerns over accurate temperatures, both of which you can avoid by following our troubleshooting tips <anchorlink> above.

Question: Is sous vide basically boiling?

Answer: Unlike boiling, sous vide cooking your food retains the natural flavors and nutrients, as they can't "escape" the bag, and you have complete control over the temperature of the water, so your food will never be under or overcooked.

Question: Can I put frozen steak in sous vide?

Answer: Yes! You can sous vide frozen meats, but keep in mind that the cold temperature of a frozen bag will increase the length of time it takes to bring your food to temperature, so a good rule of thumb is to add 60 minutes to your cook time.

Question: Why should I pan-sear meats if they're already cooked?

Answer: Is your food safe to eat after sous vide cooking? Yes. But pan-searing (or broiling) meats – with the exception of baby back ribs, which cannot be pan-seared – will deliver a more visually appealing final result and create a wonderfully textured golden-brown crust that will elevate your dining experience. Just be sure to dry the meats thoroughly (moisture is the enemy of a good char) and to only cook for 30-45 seconds per side, including the edges, to avoid increasing the temperature and drying out your meat.

Sous Vide Recipes and Tips

Now that you know all about the benefits of sous vide cooking, it's time to get cooking! We've gathered a variety of chef-approved sous-vide recipes and tips to help you get the most out of your new appliance.

- [Pan-Seared Ribeye With Crispy Potatoes, Cherry Tomato Sauté, and Whipped Cotija Cheese](#)
- [How to Sous Vide a Thick Steak](#)
- [How to Sous Vide a Chateaubriand](#)
- [How to Sous Vide a Perfect Steak](#)
- [How to Sous Vide a New York Strip Steak](#)
- [Perfect Sous Vide Filet Mignon: A How-To Guide](#)



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