I’m Dreaming of Prime Rib for Christmas Dinner

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“I’m Dreaming of Prime Rib for Christmas Dinner, Just Like the One from my Favorite Restaurant”. If only I could make it like theirs, but the cut is so expensive and I would hate to ruin it.

I’m sharing four secrets for a prime rib roast (or for that matter any roast) that turns out every time. Prime Rib is an expensive cut of meat, so if your family chooses to make Prime Rib for Christmas Dinner you want to get it right.

**Secret 1: Starts with buying the roast.** When you purchase your meat, you’re looking for a “Prime Rib Roast.” There are actually several different options.

- Bone-In vs. Boneless - While slow roasting with the bone in does lend flavor it’s not necessarily worth the added cost since we are talking about a more expensive cut of meat. It’s also easier to cut and serve a boneless prime rib.
- Fresh vs. Frozen - A fresh roast can be kept in the refrigerator for one to two days before serving, so it’s your best bet if you’re planning on preparing it soon. If you purchase a frozen roast, plan about two days to defrost your roast in the refrigerator. You do not want to start with a partially frozen roast as it guarantees uneven cooking.
- Marbling - Bone-in or boneless, fresh or frozen, the meat should be nice and marbled. It’s that ribbon of fat that keeps the meat tender and flavorful.
- Size - You should plan to purchase about 10-12 ounces per person, more if you’re purchasing a bone-in roast. So, an average 5-pound boneless roast should serve 6 to 8 people.

Now for the cooking part. If you can roast a turkey, you have everything you need for Prime Rib: a shallow roasting pan and a meat thermometer.

Line your roasting pan with foil. You can use a roasting rack if you have one. Place your roast fat-side up in the pan. Fat-side up is important as this bastes the meat while it cooks making it tender and flavorful. Preheat your oven to 350°F.

**Secret 2: Start your roast at a relatively low temperature, 350°F. You can always increase the heat at the end, but overcooking is a cardinal sin when cooking prime rib!**

You can use your own blend of seasoning or here is one that is often used on Prime Rib. In a small bowl, mix 1 teaspoon kosher salt, 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves, 1 teaspoon garlic powder and ¼ teaspoon coarse-ground black pepper. Sprinkle and press your herb mixture on top of your roast.

For a medium-rare 5-pound roast bake uncovered for 2 hours before checking for doneness. You’re looking for a 135°F internal temperature so take your roast out when the center reaches 130°F to account for what’s known as “carryover cooking” as it rests. You may need an additional 30 minutes. If you prefer medium, you’re looking for an internal temp of 150°F, which may take another 30 minutes.

Why is the rib roast baked uncovered? Ribs are a tender cut of meat and it is baked uncovered because it does not need moisture to make it tender (it’s already tender). Less tender cuts of meat like a rump roast should have moisture added and be covered.

**Secret 3: Invest in a reliable oven meat thermometer and keep tabs on your cooking progress. Don’t forget to account for about 5 additional degrees of carryover cooking.**

Once you’ve reached your desired doneness, remove from oven. Remember, the roast retains heat, which will continue to increase the temperature about five more degrees once you’ve taken it out of the oven (“carryover cooking”).
Secret 4: For heaven’s sake, let it rest!
Tent loosely with aluminum foil and let stand 15 to 20 minutes before carving to let the juices redistribute.
Use a large kitchen or chef knife to slice your roast. If your guests have varying preferences for doneness, no problem! Simply cut from the center for those who prefer a more medium-rare serving and the end for those who prefer a more done cut.
The trick to making a perfect Prime Rib or roast is all in how you prepare it. If you’ve done it right, you end up with a tender, flavorful version way better than any Thursday-night restaurant special.
“May Your Days Be Merry and Bright, and May all Your Prime Rib Roast Be Delicious”. Merry Christmas from the Phillips-Rooks District Extension Staff.
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