**Mini-activities**

**Determining Doneness of Steak**

Many cooks often learn how to determine the doneness of their steak by comparing the firmness of their meat to the firmness of their palm.

Begin by sticking out your hand and using your other finger to press on the part of the palm below the thumb; this firmness represents a raw steak.

Now take that same hand and touch your index finger to your thumb, touch the same part of your palm with your other finger again and this compares to a rare steak.

Continue touching each finger to your thumb and compare the firmness until you reach your desired doneness.

Open hand = Raw  
Index to thumb = Rare  
Middle finger to thumb = Medium Rare  
Ring finger to thumb = Medium  
Pinky to thumb = Well

**Storage Tip**

- Beef freezes very well and will last up to 4 months, make sure to cut them into smaller portions for quicker thawing and store in a vacuum seal bag, plastic bag with most of the air taken out, or freezer safe containers.
- A good way to vacuum seal your meat at home is by putting the portion(s) in the bag and dipping the bag in a bowl of water just below the seal.
- The best method of thawing meat is in the fridge, but if you choose to defrost your meat in the microwave, cook it immediately following.

**Selection Tip**

- Choose cuts of beef with fewer muscle groups, one muscle is the best and will contain less fat.
- Avoid cuts with lots of connective tissue, this makes it chewy.
- If you want lots of flavor chose a cut with more fat marbling, if you want a healthier piece of meat look for less fat marbling.

**Cooking Tips**

- Cooking your beef at a lower temperature for a longer time will give you juicy meat with lots of flavor.
- Resting your beef after cooking allows the tasty juices to redistribute throughout the piece of meat preventing it from losing juices and flavor.
- It is best to fully cook ground beef and hamburgers to kill all the bacteria that may be on the meat.
Hamburger and Cherry-Tomato Pizza

Yield: 4 Servings
Prep time: 10 minutes | Cook time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:
- 2 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 1 package frozen pizza dough, thawed
- 1 cup grated Mozzarella cheese (4 ounces)
- ½ medium red onion, thinly sliced (optional)
- Coarse salt and ground pepper
- ¾ cup store bought marinara
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- ½ pound ground beef
- All-purpose flour for work surface

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Rub a large baking sheet with oil.
2. Lightly dust work surface with flour, use a rolling pin and your hands to roll and stretch pizza dough into a 15 by 11 inch rectangle and transfer to oiled baking sheet.
3. Spread sauce evenly over dough, leaving a 1-inch border along all edges. Top with mozzarella, tomatoes, and if desired onion; scatter beef over top. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Bake until crust is golden, beef is cooked, and cheese is melted, about 20 minutes. Serve immediately.

(Source: Martha Stewart Living)

Easy Swedish Meatballs

Yield: 6-8 Servings

Ingredients:
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 large egg
- 1/4 cup seasoned bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1 pound ground beef
- Hot boiled noodles

Sauce:
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg, optional
- Minced fresh parsley, optional

Directions:
1. In a large bowl, combine the onion, egg, bread crumbs, milk, salt and pepper. Crumble beef over mixture and mix well. Shape into 1-in. meatballs, about 24.
2. Place in a shallow 1-1/2-qt. microwave-safe dish. Cover and microwave on high until meat is no longer pink, 7-1/2 minutes; drain.
3. Combine the soup, sour cream, milk, parsley and, if desired, nutmeg; pour over meatballs. Cover and cook on high until heated through, 5-6 minutes. Serve with noodles and, if desired, top with parsley. (Source: Taste of Home)

Kid-friendly eating tips

- Hiding vegetables like mushrooms or spinach in hamburgers or meatballs is a great way to give kids an extra serving of vegetables without any fuss.

Benefits

- Beef is an excellent source of 10 essential nutrients: Protein, zinc, vitamin B12, selenium, phosphorus, choline, niacin, vitamin B16, iron and riboflavin.
- Red meats like beef are excellent sources of iron that help increase your hemoglobin and give you healthy blood.

Tidbit

All beef products come from different parts of a cow. Cows are native to India but spread to China, Africa, and Europe where they were then brought to America by European explorers in 1493. Now cows can be found all over the globe in many different types of cuisine. The United States produce about 20% of the world’s beef, making them the largest producer in the world followed by Brazil, Europe and China.