



Podcast Script

Season 1 / Episode 5 - [Steak au poivre / Professionalism Pt 2]

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Opening

Hello my fellow chefs, today we talk Steak au poivre, and professionalism in the kitchen again. I am Mark Grigsby, your chef and guide through this experience and this... is the incrEDIBLE Discourse.

Introduction

Hello and welcome... I am Mark Grigsby and you have found me here at The IncrEDIBLE Discourse. I'm sure you noticed that in my opening I mentioned professionalism "again".. Air quotes.. And I wanted to kinda touch on this again because I feel like there were a few things that I didn't say or elaborate on because the show started getting super long. I also mentioned last week that I thought that maybe another episode that just highlighted professionalism may be necessary and the more I thought about it all week, the more I felt compelled to do it. So, this week I chose a shorter recipe to share that is amazing and relatively easy to make. If you like beef, this one's right up your alley. It's a classic staple in French cuisine... the steak au poivre avec frites.. Or pepper steak with french fries... and no not pepper steak like at Chinese restaurant, this is a pepper crusted steak.. Like .. in a.. French restaurant?... anyhow..

I like this recipe because it truly is a timeless classic... The use of peppercorns to season meats was popular in European cooking as far back as the middle ages when pepper was valuable and considered an exotic spice.. And this dish itself has been around since the 19th century and was considered a luxury due to the use of tender cuts of beef. By the 20th century this dish was a staple in French cuisine and featured in France in many restaurants and bistros. I like the tangy and silkiness of the sauce and I am a beef lover by nature so this is one of my all time favorites. This can be a steak night dish at your house, or it can be an elegant, high priced dish in your restaurant. I like to use the peppercorn melange in this dish as I think the different peppercorns give different flavor profiles and make the dish a little more interesting. This is a common ingredient, but if you can't find it using black peppercorns will do just fine. I also add the mustard as a twist to add a little bit of complexity to the sauce. Mustard and beef go well together and this addition compliments the richness of the cream and the sharpness of the brandy. I use brined green peppercorns in the sauce and like this because it's another layer of flavor on top of everything going on in this brandy cream sauce. The brining makes the peppercorn not as abrasive and also makes them slightly softer giving a better experience on the palette.

I have been making this dish since I worked fine dining in the florida keys over a decade ago. Remember a couple of episodes ago I told you a story about a chef from Atlanta who didn't like me and told me he was gonna make me quit? This is the asshole who taught me this dish. Since then, going through many other restaurants that served this same dish, I have seen a few different interpretations and even served it in my restaurants many many times. It's rich, it's tangy and beefy and could be made in just about any setting you can think of so get ready... we're fucking shit up for real today!

On a side note..

I also am giving my home cooks the night off.. I don't have an advice topic for you all today because I wanted to really dive into this professionalism thing. I really think that there needs to be some attention given to the subject. This generation should hear it from someone close to their age and someone has to remind these old dogs of the good old days when we enjoyed what we we're doing and we did it with respect and dignity. Anyway.. First let's eat!

Topic 1 - Steak au poivre with pomme frites

Yield: 1 portions

Equipment:

Alright so let's go over the equipment you will need to pull this one off. To start we're going to need a plastic zip bag, and I prefer a freezer bag rather than a storage bag because they're a little bit thicker. We're going to use this bag to bust peppercorns so you need something that will resist the pounding. That leads me to my next piece of equipment.. A mallet. We're going to use this as the instrument to crush these peppercorns. Once you get these things crushed we will also need a plate to put them in so we can crust our steaks evenly. We're going to need a skillet to sear the steaks, cast iron works well here, but you can use stainless steel if you have one. Lastly you'll need measuring equipment.. Spoons and cups, a set of tongs, a larger chef spoon and a deep fryer for the fries. If you're at home, an air fryer works well here.

Now if you like your meat done more than medium rare, you should have an aluminum lined sheet pan. I like mine on the rarer side, so that's how this recipe will play out. When we get that far, I'll let you know. If you're not cooking on propane, you will need a lighter. We will be using a technique called flambe today, where we will be igniting the brandy to burn the alcohol off.

And that's it. Relatively simple items that most household kitchens have on hand and things that are very very common in professional kitchens.. But if they're not so common in your kitchen, I will set some links up on the description of some things that will work here.

Ingredients:

Let's talk ingredients..

As usual let's start with the obvious.. The steak. Today I will be using Filet mignon, or tenderloin, but you can use almost any cut for this recipe depending on your taste or budget. This dish works really well with strip steak, ribeye and sirloin. It's really up to you. Now we need to get into the spice cabinet and grab just two things... kosher salt and peppercorn melange. As I said earlier, if you don't have or cannot get melange, black peppercorns work fine here. I'm going to use clarified butter to sear the steak. I like the flavor element, but you don't have to use this. Olive oil, or canola oil or whatever oil you prefer works and serves the same purpose here. Whatever you do, do not use whole butter. Clarified butter is whole butter that has been separated from its milk based component. Using whole butter would be a bad choice, as these milk solids would burn in the high heat we will be using to sear the meat resulting in a bitter flavor and a black color. Now you are going to need about 4 tablespoons of whole butter to butter baste this steak.

Now for the sauce, we're going to need 1 shallot minced, 2 garlic cloves microplaned, a 1/2C of brandy, a 1/2C of veal or beef stock, 1C of heavy cream, 2 tablespoons of green peppercorns in brine and a teaspoon of smooth dijon mustard.

I am going to be featuring this steak and sauce with french fries.. Or pomme frites as the french would say so we will need about a handful of those.. And don't use those thick ass steak fries. You want them to be thin and crispy. Shoe string size.

To garnish I want to break out the microgreens arugula and radish, but if you don't have this on hand a little bit of chopped parsley will be fine.

Ready to cook? Let's get in it.

Method:

Alright so before I can get anything on the heat, I have to get our key ingredient together first.. The peppercorns. I'm going to take my peppercorn melange and add it to the zip bag. Then I'm going to take my mallet and go to town on this shit. I don't want to go nuts here and risk hitting it so hard I fuck up the bag, but you do need more than a tap to bust these things down. Now you don't want to crush these too finely. The object is to crush them, and leave them somewhat coarse. Now I'm going to crust this steak, but before I do I'm going to pat dry these steaks with a paper towel and make sure they're as dry as possible. This is going to help get a nice and even sear as well as help the peppercorns to stick to the meat. I'm going to generously season the steak with kosher salt. Now I take the steak and put it salt-side down first onto my plate with the peppercorns and gently press the meat into the peppercorns. Again, with the kosher salt I'm going to generously season the uncrusted side. Now we're ready to make some magic.

Heat the skillet on high heat.. The pan has to be really hot to sear the meat almost 400 degrees. Now I add my clarified butter, tilt my skillet so that the pan gets coated and then I drop my steak peppercorn crust side up. Usually I would tell you to sear the crust side down, but in this case I wanna make sure I get a really nice sear on the bottom side. You're looking for a really good browning or maillard reaction. The maillard reaction is a chemical reaction between amino acids and reducing sugars that occurs when food is cooked at high temperatures, typically above 300 degrees. It is responsible for the browning of foods and contributes to the development of complex flavors and aromas. This process is gonna take 1-2 minutes and then I'm going to flip this sucker over to the crusted side. After about 15- 20 seconds, I'm going to add the whole butter. Taking the chef's spoon, I'm gonna tilt the pan towards me and begin to spoon this melted butter over the top of the meat. This process is called butter basting. This technique adds flavor and moisture and also helps to prevent the food from drying out. You see this done all the time on those competitive tv shows, this is the reason. I'm gonna repeat the spooning process several times while the crust is searing on the bottom of the skillet. Afterward, I will turn the steak on its side and sear all of the sides ever so slightly, about 20-30 seconds per side. I want to lock in the juices and flavors, but I also don't want to hammer this steak. I want it to be nice and medium rare. Now I'm going to take the meat out of the pan and rest it.. It is at this point.. If you don't like your steak that rare.. That we will pop it into an oven at about 350 degrees for about 3 or 4 minutes. That should take it to medium.. Now if you like your steak more well done than that you are a criminal. Don't use my recipe and fuck up a steak like that. It's a crime and I will not aid you in such a thing.

Now while the meat is resting, we're going to make the sauce. In the same skillet I'm going to add the shallot and reduce the heat about medium. I'm going to cook the shallots for about 45 seconds and then add the garlic and stir... now because I microplaned the garlic this shit will burn faster so you have to watch it... it would be a shame for us to have come all this way and fuck up now so pay attention to whats happening in the pan. Now I'm going to add the brandy to the pan to deglaze.. We all remember what deglazing is right? If you don't go back and listen to my episode where we talk about this at length. Now here is an important note.. If you are cooking on propane you want to remove the pan from the heat before adding the brandy.. If you don't this will go poof and it will scare you. I have seen this many times. Do it off the heat and then bring back to the heat and tip it slightly to ignite.. You want to ignite this because you want the alcohol in the brandy to burn off. Now if you are not cooking with propane or open flame, you're still going to ignite this and you will do this by adding the brandy and using a simple lighter. The brandy will ignite quickly and probably burn for about 30 seconds. Once the flame show is over, the alcohol is out and we are ready to proceed. Now I'm going to add the stock, the cream, the mustard, the green peppercorns and a pinch of salt.. Mix well and bring to a simmer. I'm going to reduce this for about 3-4 minutes seizing into a thick and creamy sauce. While this is happening, I'm gonna drop my fries into the grease and fry until golden and crispy. When they are finished I'm gonna toss them in salt and now I am ready to plate this shit and eat!

If you're at home, You can plate this as simply as spooning the sauce over top of the steak and serve the fries on the side; or you can plate the fries under the steak if you wanna be fancy.

If you're at a restaurant, I would have also tossed the fries in a little chopped parsley and a little grated pecorino cheese or something similar and put them on the side of a nice round plate. Then I take the sauce and I spoon a generous, but not obnoxious amount opposite side of the fries. Then I place the steak on top of the sauce and garnish with the microgreens. It's important to note that I did not pour the sauce on top of the steak. I want to showcase the steak and the beautiful crust that I built. I chose the micro arugula and radish because I like the spiciness they bring and the color is really nice and bright on the plate and accents the dish.

And that's it.. We made steak au poivre with french fries or steak au poivre avec frites. It's delicious and beautiful and really not that difficult to make.

Let me know how this recipe turned out for you, I'm always interested in your results and journeys. You can always visit theincrediblediscourse.com 24 hours a day, 7 days a week 365 days a year. Send me some pictures of your work and let me know how you did, or if you need some additional tips or advice you can always reach out to us and we'll help you out.. Free of charge. The goal here is to help mentor and help aspiring cooks and chefs reach their goals and dreams.

anyway...

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Now it's time for..

Food for Thought; or what i like to call... Pro Tips from a Chef's Lips....

Now I said earlier in the show that I would be giving my home cooks the night off after the recipe and here we are. Clock out home chefs, thank you for all that you do. I really wanted to expand the thoughts on professionalism in the professional kitchen with cooks and chefs of all walks. This advice applies to all those who are just starting out in their careers and need a few really good guidelines that will get them on the right track early in the game, or to those seasoned vets in the kitchen who may have lost their way a little bit and need a reminder that working in a professional kitchen goes beyond just cooking food. I think cooking food and cooking great food is a huge part of what we do, but if you lack the professionalism and respect for the industry your cooking becomes an afterthought.

Topic 2 - Professionalism pt. 2

So last episode I talked about professionalism possibly being the difference between you landing or keeping a job or not and I want to reiterate just how important of a statement that really is. To sum up the importance I'll say this.. Your chef would much rather work with someone with a smaller skill set, but with a much better attitude than someone who knows how to execute everything but is a complete asshole and drags everyone and everything down all

the time. Now I understand all that goes on and into running professional kitchens of all degrees, right... and I know the pressure the team and chef feel when trying to put out great food fast and how that can cause tense situations. But that isn't what I'm talking about here. I'm talking about the guy who is unwilling to help the next man out, the guy who purposely seems to sabotage the team or chef at every chance they get, the guy who is always late and always has an excuse why, the guy who calls out once a week the night after they went out drinking with coworker, or the guy who comes in with a chef coat that is completely fucked, smells and doesn't have an apron to work with. These people are everywhere. And really it takes just one to create an uncomfortable environment for the other chefs and cooks to work in. If you're that guy, please listen to today's jeremiad and make the change.. Get better... give a shit about what you're doing.

So after I finished last week's episode, I felt like there were things that I left out that I just couldn't ignore and needed to be said. And the more I thought about it throughout the week, the more it bothered me. It bothered me because I remembered a few things that I felt were crucial to this conversation. Last time, I spoke about calling out and noted that shit happens and that your chef understands all the way up until the point where they don't. And one of the quickest ways to get the chef to that point would be calling out because you're too hungover to come to work. This happens a lot a lot in this industry. Let me tell you.. This industry is full of vices and temptations, and honestly I haven't met a kitchen worker in my career that does not have some kind of weakness. From drinking, smoking, drugs, gambling, women, etc.. They all have one. And they have one because of the high stress environment we work in. Everyone needs something to destress themselves and each to his own here, but I have religiously told my staff to try their best to make conscious efforts to make good decisions that won't affect their job or way of making money. Don't go out and get so banged up that you're sick as a dog the next morning and cannot physically come to work. I'm not saying you can't go out for a drink after work.. Or party with your friends or coworkers.. What I'm saying is.. Whatever you do, make sure you get to work the next day. The reality is your body needs rest and after getting your ass kicked on the line all night during a busy service, staying out till 3 or 4 am and then trying to make the opening 9 am shift and double will be nearly impossible. And even if you make it in, your quality of work will be affected. You won't be as sharp because you're tired and you will likely be irritable and a pain in the ass to work with. Be kind to your body chefs, you'll thank me as you get older.. And if you're old already.. Take your old ass to bed. You already know you need it. The "work all day and party all night" lifestyle isn't sustainable.

If you're going to leave a job... It's completely understandable. Different opportunities come up or maybe you're just not happy working in this kitchen anymore, and that's ok. But the most professional thing to do in this situation is to put in a notice. Don't just stop showing up. Don't burn a bridge. You want to be able to add this job to your resume so when your next opportunity arises you can use them as a reference of your work. Putting in your notice shows professionalism and respect for your employer. You never know when you may cross paths with the owner or the chef again and you don't want them to bring up the time you bailed. And remember the cooking world and industry is big and we all know each other in some capacity and talk.. Here's a good story as an example. A while back I worked at this restaurant and had 2

sous chefs when I started. Both nice guys and professional, but one of them had a lot to learn skill wise. Eventually I got promoted to chef de cuisine in this place and became his boss. He eventually gave me a 2 week notice on paper and left and moved out of state and continued working in the industry.. Fast forward to 2024, just a few weeks ago actually... he applied at one of my close friends' restaurants in downtown miami and listed the place that we worked together on his resume.. My friend notices this, calls me up and didn't ask me what I thought of him.. Didn't ask me what skills he knows.. Didn't ask me if he's competent.. He asked me flat out if he should hire this person. It was a direct question that was asked because of the rapport and trust that I have with my friend. He didn't have to ask me about the applicant's background or experience, he just needed to know if he should hire him. Luckily I am a fair minded person and green lighted the hire, but had this applicant burned me once upon a time ago when we worked together I probably would've shut it down and told him I didn't think it was a good idea. Now he's working for my good friend and making great money and is in an amazing situation. Don't ever discount what professionalism can do for you and your career chefs. It may not seem like it now, but you never know who knows who and where it one day will lead you.

Another point that came across my mind when reflecting on last week's episode was having too much pride at the wrong time. There is nothing wrong with having pride.. Until you're too proud to ask for help. There is nothing wrong with asking for help, especially when you have a lot to do or you're backed up and there are people around you who are less busy and could lend a hand. Know when you have too much to handle and communicate. Now don't be the guy who asks for help and then disappears.. That would be abusing it. Even as a chef with years of experience, I still ask for help. I have always said, kitchens are a team sport. It takes the effort of the entire team to have a consistent and efficient kitchen that ensures customer satisfaction. Help each other because the team is only as strong as its weakest link.

Communication is vital to a kitchen's success.. In my last example, communicating when you need help is just one of many things that need to be communicated. Talking about key points in service like the specials, the touch points of the dishes, the team and their positions, courses, parties and events.. All of these things are necessary for the kitchen to operate at a high level. If no one knows what is going on because there is a failure to communicate, how can we please the guest who has the expectation of excellence when they dine in our establishments?

The Last thing I want to talk about today is respect. I saved this for last on purpose because I think it is the core and basis of professionalism. Respecting each other, your chef, the restaurant and what we do is such a big part of being a culinary professional. Being respectful builds teamwork and efficiency because you have to rely on each other to get the job done. Having a positive environment and clear communication helps get tasks executed faster and more accurately because everyone is working towards the same goal.

Being respectful also can contribute to the overall safety in the kitchen. Disrespect can lead to distractions, miscommunication and mistakes which can increase the chances of accidents or injuries. Be careful and don't fuck around.. Respect the craft and people are less likely to get hurt.

Kitchens are naturally high stress environments and being disrespectful can cause a lot of unnecessary stress and reduce morale. Being respectful helps manage stress and promotes focus. And when there is more focus, learning and growth is fostered. The team is more willing to help each other, share their knowledge, provide feedback and support each other. And when there is more growth and learning the quality of work ends up being higher just by nature. Everyone is striving for excellence and are less likely to put out sub par dishes because they care about what is happening around them.

Maintaining professionalism builds a good reputation for yourself and you will be more likely to achieve advancement or find better opportunities simply because you were a respectful person. It's crazy how close in connection these two terms really are and how far they can get you in your culinary career. The most efficient kitchens and kitchens that perform at the highest levels are those that are respectful and promote growth and learning. You're not there to pick on the guy who doesn't know enough, and you're not there to just get a check.. You should be there because you give a shit about your work and what that contributes to the overall success of the restaurant you're at.

Anyhow I hope you try the steak au poivre recipe and learned a lot about being professional in the kitchen today. I'm sure there is a lot more detail I could go into about it, but I think I touched the bases really well over these last two episodes. It's not an exact map of what to do, but it is sort of a list of things to keep in mind when working in a professional kitchen. Just remember this.. You get what you put into it.. If you work hard, be respectful and try your best it won't go unnoticed and you could get that promotion or opportunity.. But if you're an asshole you'll likely be cooking on the line in various places doing the same thing for 30 years and never get to be the chef.

Keep growing chefs. Keep learning. Keep eating. And get out there and make a fucking difference. 1% better than yesterday, every day guys.

Outro

If you like what you heard today leave me 5 stars on spotify or a great review wherever you're listening to this and make sure you visit us at theincrediblediscourse.com and all of our socials now that they're up finally. I appreciate your time as always. I'm Mark Grigsby and you've just been put through The IncrEDIBLE Discourse. Till next time... where my theme music at?