

*Far Niente*

FAMILY OF WINERIES  
AND VINEYARDS

STEAK FRITES  
MAITRE D'HOTEL



© BOUCHON BISTRO

**STEAK FRITES MAITRE D'HOTEL**  
EXCERPTED FROM BOUCHON BY THOMAS KELLER  
(ARTISAN BOOKS). COPYRIGHT © 2004

**CHEF'S NOTE:** Steak frites and bavette, or skirt steak, are among the simplest bistro dishes and the most popular. The cut of meat we use at Bouchon for the steak frites, called a flatiron, is from the shoulder and has a powerfully beefy flavor. Flatiron and skirt steak, less popular secondary cuts, aren't always available at supermarkets. If you have trouble finding a flatiron steak, hanger steak (onglet), a big beef round, or a top sirloin steak, sometimes called a faux filet, can be used here. These are not melt-in-your-mouth dishes—they're meat-and-potatoes. The steaks should be chewy, and they should have a lot of character.

## INGREDIENTS

*Serves 4*

### FOR THE STEAK

Four 10-ounce flatiron steaks  
(also called top blade chuck  
steaks; see below)

Kosher salt and freshly ground  
black pepper

Canola oil

4 tablespoons (2 ounces)

unsalted butter

2 cups chopped shallots

2 teaspoons minced thyme

Four ½-inch-thick rounds

Maitre d'Hotel Butter

(recipe follows)

Pommes Frites (recipe follows)

## METHOD

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

Generously season both sides of the steaks with salt and pepper, keeping in mind that the salt and pepper will also season the shallots as they cook.

Place two large skillets over high heat. Add 1/s inch of canola oil to each skillet and heat until hot. Add 2 steaks and 1 teaspoon butter to each skillet, reduce the heat slightly, and cook for about a minute to brown the first side. Turn the steaks over, tilt the skillet, and use a spoon to baste the meat as it sautes on the second side. When the second side of the steak has browned, but the steak is still quite undercooked, drain off any excess fat. Scatter half the shallots, thyme, and the remaining butter around the steaks in each skillet and stir to combine. After 2 to 3 minutes, when the steaks are cooked to rare, transfer them to a small baking sheet. Continue to cook the shallots until they have softened but have not browned, 1 to 2 minutes.

Spoon the shallots over the steaks and place the baking sheet in the oven for about 5 minutes, or until the steaks are cooked to medium-rare. Place a round of maitre d'hotel butter on top of each steak and return to the oven just until the butter begins to melt. Arrange the steaks on serving plates with the frites.

**MAITRE D'HOTEL HERB BUTTER**  
EXCERPTED FROM BOUCHON BY THOMAS KELLER  
(ARTISAN BOOKS). COPYRIGHT © 2004

**CHEF'S NOTE:** It's such a simple idea, but we sometimes forget how wonderful good, fresh butter is smeared on meat. Adding seasoning, such as aromatic herbs, some salt and an acid, for a preparation called a compound butter, deepens the pleasure. Butter made with chopped parsley and lemon juice, the most common form of compound butter, is called *beurre de maitre d'hotel*. It's superb on steaks, chicken, and fish—an all-purpose sauce.

Aside from our using an excellent butter, I am interested in the handling of the parsley and the choice of acid. Many cooks are taught to rinse parsley and to wring it out in a towel, a treatment that will prolong its shelf life for a day or two. Don't do this—you'll wash away the flavor. You want the bright specks of green for visual interest, and the slightly bitter green chlorophyll taste goes well with meat. Regarding the acid, while lemon goes well and is customary, vinegar is an excellent choice too. I think a sherry vinegar goes especially well with grilled meats.

## INGREDIENTS

*Makes 6 Tablespoons*

6 tablespoons (3 ounces)  
unsalted butter, at room  
temperature  
1 ½ teaspoons chopped Italian  
parsley  
1 ½ teaspoons fresh lemon  
juice  
1/8 teaspoon kosher salt, or to  
taste

## METHOD

Put the butter in a small bowl and stir with a spoon or stiff spatula until smooth. Add the remaining ingredients and stir to combine.

Cut a piece of plastic wrap and form the butter into a rough log about 4 inches long, about 2 inches from one end of the plastic wrap. Roll up the butter in the plastic, then twist the ends to form a compact log about 1 ¼ inches in diameter. (The butter can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days or frozen, well wrapped, for up to 2 months.)

## POMMES FRITES

EXCERPTED FROM BOUCHON BY THOMAS KELLER

(ARTISAN BOOKS). COPYRIGHT © 2004

### INGREDIENTS

Large russet potatoes (2 per person), washed  
Peanut oil for deep-frying  
Kosher salt

*Chef's Note: The russet potato is the best for fries because of its high starch content and its shape.*

### METHOD

Set out a large bowl of cold water. Using a potato cutter, a mandoline, or a knife, cut each potato into sticks 1/4 inch thick and 4 1/2 inches long and place in the water. Discard any cuts that are irregular; they'll cook unevenly. When all the potatoes have been cut, change the water several times until the starch has been rinsed from the potatoes and the water remains clear. (The potatoes can be refrigerated in the cold water for several hours.)

**FOR THE FIRST FRYING:** Fill a deep fryer or a large heavy pot with 3 to 4 inches of good peanut oil for the best flavor and heat to 320°F.

Remove the potatoes from the water and drain well on paper towels. Place a handful of potatoes in the hot oil, using a basket insert if you have one; shake the basket a few times or stir the potatoes. Do not crowd the potatoes; there should be at least twice as much oil as potatoes. Fry until the potatoes are cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes; they shouldn't be any darker than a very pale gold. Remove the fries from the oil and drain on paper towels. Repeat with the remaining potatoes. (The blanched potatoes can be held for 2 to 3 hours at room temperature.) Reserve the oil in the fryer or pot.

**FOR THE SECOND FRYING:** Reheat the oil to 375°F. Add one portion of the fries at a time and fry for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the potatoes are a deep gold with a crisp exterior. Quickly drain on paper towels, sprinkle with salt, and serve.