

My Experience Dry Aging Ribeye Steaks

After buying very expensive dry aged steaks from a supermarket 20 minutes away, my wife and I really liked the taste of the dry aged steaks, but wanted to see if we could do it ourselves and get the same results for less money. I did a little research and put dry aging bags on my Christmas list. Our son gave me a package of each of the three different sizes of the UMa Dry Aging Bags which are top rated. Each package had 3 bags in it.

I watched a couple of the videos on the UMAi site and was ready to give it a try. In the town we live in in Maryland, we like the meat from the Safeway better than the Harris Teeter (which does not have a dry aging using in the store) and the Giant which are all about a mile apart. The butcher shop at the Safeway also is very willing to do customer cuts when we ask. I decided to dry age a boneless ribeye and wanted to get 6 or 7 steaks for the two of us that we could freeze. Anything bigger than that would just take up too much room in our freezer. I chose boneless so I could cut the steaks to the thickness I wanted, about 1 ½". With a bone in roast, the cut is between each bone and the steaks would be about 2" thick which is too large for two of us.

Our past experience was that a 1 ½” thick boneless steak would be a little over a pound and feed the two of us for dinner with enough left over for us to have a steak salad for lunch. That is also a great size to Reverse Sear, our preferred way to cook steak.

Several times a year our Safeway will put Bone In Ribeye on sale so we kept an eye out for that sale. The picture of the sticker shows that instead of \$14.99, the sale price was \$7.99. I asked the butcher for a 5 rib roast and could he cut off the bones and leave them in the package so I would get the sale price and have the bones for another meal. This 13.2 lb. roast was only \$105.55 with the sale. But Safeway also has coupons for their registered customers if you sign in and claim the coupon electronically. We did that and our price for this roast was only \$79!

I took the bones and cut them into five pieces and, as shown in the picture, they had lots of meat on them. I froze



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them for another meal. In computing my cost for making my own dry aged steaks I applied the full \$79 against the steaks and considered the rib bones a free meal for us.



I chose the largest of the UMAi bags, the DARIB Ribeye which is 12x24 inches, so as the picture shows my 13 lb. roast looks tiny once I sealed in the bag. That sized bag could fit a full ribeye roast and I could have used the DARST Roast bag which is 10x20 inches. The bag forms a bond with the proteins on the surface of the roast, slowing moisture release and oxygen exchange and blocking odors and contamination.

The unique UMAi approach is to use a vacuum sealer and seal a VacMouse vacuum strip, which comes with the package, so that it allows small amount of air to flow in and out of the bag during the dry aging process. They recommend doing a double seal which is what I did. It is not a total vacuum



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seal, some air is left in the bag as it seals. 75% of contact with the bag is fine to start with and the Vac Mouse allows for the bag to tightly come in contact with roast by the end of the first week.

Rather than take pages to give you a full description of the process I will recommend clicking on the link below to watch the 10 minute video which gives an enjoyable introduction to the process.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGMuWEhAWTc&list=PLU7RqiCq-smfgsCtmge3nuJBtAwkEQT-X&index=9>

I will talk about my experience with the process in the rest of this writeup. I found the instructions provided by UMAi to be very good and after watching a couple of the suggested videos, I had no problems.

As mentioned in my blog post, my wife would not give up half of a shelf in our kitchen refrigerator for five weeks. I had to do the dry aging in the old refrigerator we had in the basement. A modern, frost-free refrigerator is needed for the dry aging to work properly. Our basement refrigerator is over 30 years old and, while it meets the above definition, it does not get a lot of traffic. It is probably opened and closed less than once a day on average. I bought a small fan that had a rechargeable battery and put that on one of the doors of the refrigerator to give air flow around the contents when the door was closed. I recharged the battery for a few hours each day. I don't know how useful that was, but my results were great and the effort required was minimal, so am glad I did that.

I like to smoke a beef brisket or pork shoulder and when that smoke hits the 'pause' phase, I wrap the meat in butcher paper tied with string instead of in foil to get it through that phase. I bought a big roll of butcher paper that I use for that. When either my wife or I are doing some serious butchering of large proteins into smaller portions, I like to take a large piece of the butcher paper to cover the countertop and you will see in the pictures I did that in putting the roast into the bag at the start and for trimming the roast and cutting it into steaks at the end of the process. It makes clean up a lot easier, especially with the trimming that needs to be done when the roast comes out of the bag.

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Here is the roast after it has been in the bag dry aging for five weeks. UMAi says 28-45 days for dry aging and recommends 35 days for steaks. Take a look at the first picture above of the roast before it went into the bag and compare it to this picture of it out of the bag. The roast weighed 12 lb. going into the bag and 10 lb. coming out of the bag. A big difference!



You can see the dark bark that now covers the entire outside of the roast. That bark is not edible and needed to be trimmed off. That trimming is the most difficult part of the process and if it was a bone-in roast, that would have been even more difficult. I sharpened my Chef's knife and my boning knife and between the two of them I was able

to get the bark off in shallow cuts, so I was not losing much of the meat below the bark. After trimming off the bark, the roast was 7.2 lb. and about 10" wide. I cut five steaks 1 1/2" wide that weighed either 1.1 or 1.2 lb. and the last steak was wider and weighed 1.4 lb. We will save that one when we have a guest for dinner as it will easily feed three.



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My wife used the vacuum sealer to cryovac five of the steaks individually, marking each bag with the weight of that steak and freezing them. We Reverse Seared the sixth steak for dinner that evening. The steaks will keep in the refrigerator about three days after cutting and freeze really well.



Since the whole roast cost me \$79 the six steaks cost me \$10.97/lb., and I have the rib bones for a free meal. The boneless ribeye steaks in the case at the supermarket are \$17/lb. so my dry aged steaks are about 1/3 of the cost to buy them from the Harris Teeter store that has the dry aging unit and \$6 cheaper than steaks that have not been dry aged. The time I spent getting the roast into the bag and then trimming it and cutting the steaks was a couple of hours total. I am very happy with the results and plan to do it a couple of times a year when I can get the same big savings when I buy the roast.

My recommendations:

- If you have not tried a dry aged steak, see if you can find a retailer that has them and get a thick one you can reverse sear and decide if you think it is more tender and flavorful than just grilling a steak. If Harris Teeter has stores in your area, see if any of them have the dry aging units. If not, you might try an Internet search for dry aged

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steaks in your area. My wife and I are spoiled by having tender, juicy steaks that are full of flavor.

- If you do think that dry aging makes a big difference, see if you can free up half a shelf in a modern refrigerator for five weeks. That is a big ask and may be a showstopper for you. If you can do that, get a package of the UMAi bags from Amazon, find a boneless ribeye with a really good sale price, and try dry aging the steaks yourself. The trimming will be the toughest part unless you have very good knife skills. A good knife that is well sharpened will be needed.
- Check out my blog for how to reverse sear steaks and for a good wine to enjoy with it. I prefer a nice Bordeaux or Rhone red and I have a number of suggestions in my wine blogs.

Let me know how this works for you.