



Iron Rich Food & Recipe Guide



American
Red Cross

Iron Rich Food & Recipe Guide

Help save lives.

The American Red Cross has a constant and ongoing need for blood and platelet donations. Donating blood removes iron from your body, which is essential to help maintain strength and energy. The Red Cross encourages all blood and platelet donors to learn how to maintain healthy iron levels, and to understand how a blood donation can impact the level of iron in your body.

In this guide, you will find:

- **General Information about Iron & Hemoglobin**
- **Iron Rich Food Pyramid: Foods with the Most Iron to the Least**
- **Iron Rich Food Recipes**
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General Information About Iron & Hemoglobin

Hemoglobin is a protein in your body that contains iron and gives blood its red color. Hemoglobin is responsible for carrying oxygen from your lungs to nourish the tissues throughout your body. Iron, a part of hemoglobin, is an essential mineral found in the foods we eat. Iron helps your body make new red blood cells and can help to replace those lost through blood donation.

If I donate blood, will the Red Cross check my iron or hemoglobin levels?

The Red Cross does not measure your iron level before donating but does check your hemoglobin level. Your hemoglobin level is checked using a fingerstick prior to donating. If your hemoglobin is low, we will ask that you wait to donate at a future date.

What is the minimum hemoglobin level needed to donate blood?

To help ensure that it is safe for you to donate, females must have a minimum hemoglobin level of 12.5g/dL and males must have a minimum level of 13.0g/dL.

Which foods have the most iron?

As part of a healthy routine, the Red Cross recommends that all donors eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet that contains foods rich in iron and high in vitamin C. Donors should also avoid foods that may block the absorption of iron in your body.

Foods have two types of iron: heme iron and non-heme iron. Heme iron is most easily absorbed by your body. It is found in meat and animal products such as beef, turkey (especially dark meat), chicken, lamb, pork and liver.

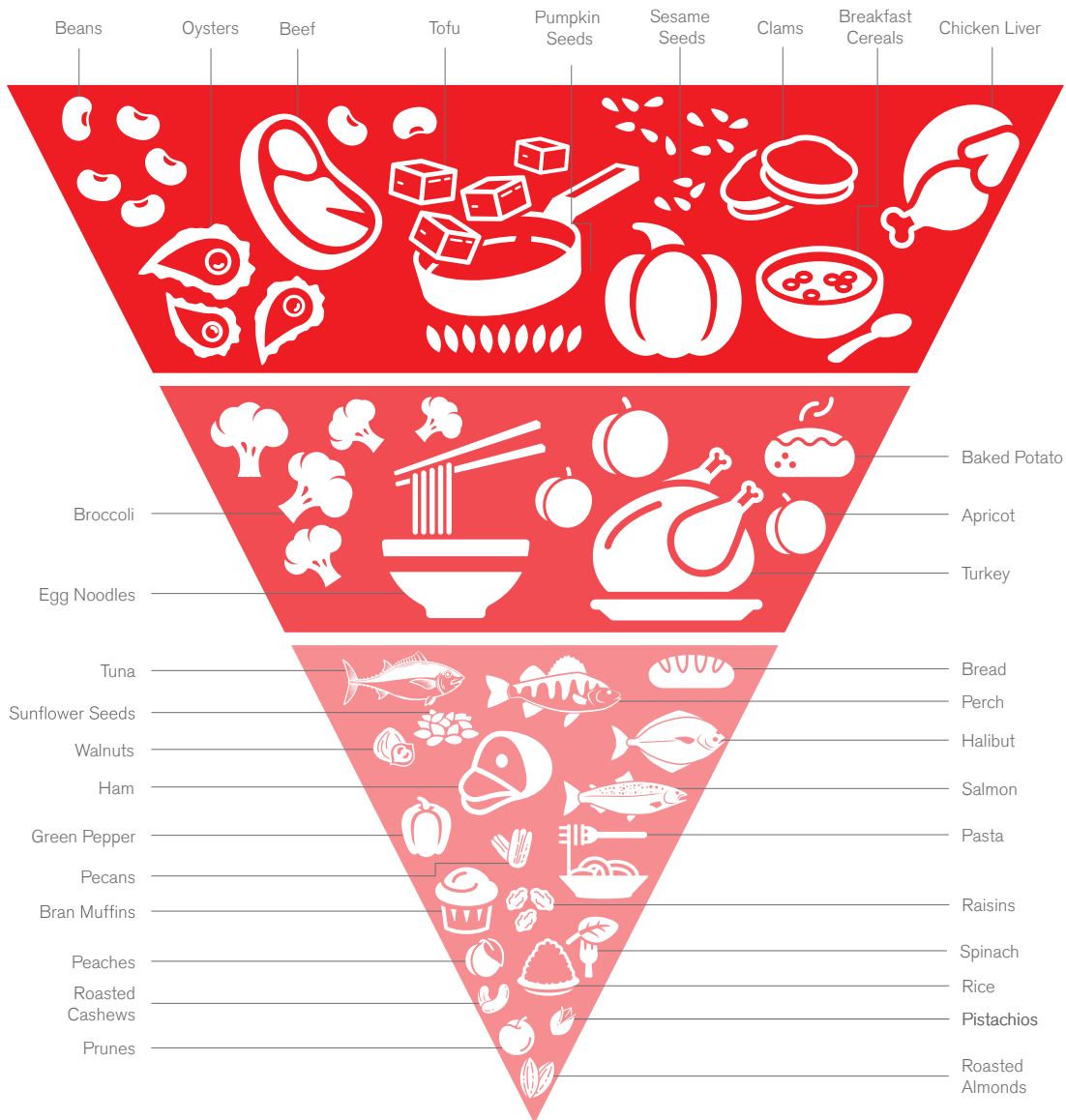
Non-heme iron is not as easily absorbed by your body but is still a good source of iron and essential if you don't eat meat. Examples of foods high in non-heme iron are breakfast cereals fortified by iron, breads and pasta (whole grain and enriched), tofu, beans, lentils, peanuts, dried fruits like raisins and eggs.

Which foods decrease the absorption of iron?

The following can decrease the amount of iron your body absorbs: coffee or tea; red wine; chocolate; high fiber foods; some medications like antacids; and high calcium foods (like milk or cheese).

This doesn't mean that you should remove these foods from your diet, but you should consider having them with iron-rich meals.

Iron Rich Food Pyramid



Iron is an essential mineral that is needed for healthy blood. You can get iron from the foods you eat. This guide shows the foods with the most iron to the lowest. Try to combine non-heme iron foods with vitamin C (for example, a glass of orange juice) to increase absorption of iron.

Talk to your healthcare provider to determine how much iron you need every day.

Foods to avoid: Fried foods, butter, mayonnaise, ice cream, chips, cheesecake, fatty meat, duck, gravy, bacon and sausage, cream soups.

[Click here to schedule to donate](#) or call 1-800-RED CROSS.

Iron Rich Food Recipe

Beef Lettuce Cups

Sponsored by Herbalife Nutrition

Serves 4

Ingredients

Sauce Mixture:

- 2 tbsp oyster-flavored sauce
- 2 tbsp light soy sauce
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp rice wine or dry sherry
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- ¼ tsp ground white pepper

Combine the sauce mixture ingredients and set aside.



Filling and Assembly:

- 1 head butter lettuce, separated into leaves
- 1 ½ pounds extra-lean ground beef (10% fat or less)
- 1 tbsp canola oil
- 1 medium carrot, grated
- 2 green onions, minced
- 1 8-ounce can water chestnuts, drained and chopped
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- Prepared hoisin sauce (usually available in the Asian foods section of the grocery store)

Instructions

1. Rinse whole lettuce leaves and pat dry, being careful not to tear them. Set aside.
2. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add ground beef and sauté, breaking up the meat with a wooden spoon into small pieces, until it is browned and cooked through, about 5 to 7 minutes. If there is any liquid left in the skillet, drain it off, then transfer the cooked meat to a bowl and set aside.
3. Return the skillet to the heat and add the canola oil. When oil is hot, add the carrot, green onions, and water chestnuts and stir fry for a minute or two until just starting to soften.
4. Return the meat to the pan, mix well, and pour in the sauce mixture. Stir until the meat is evenly coated, then remove from the heat.
5. To serve, spoon a few teaspoons of hoisin sauce on each lettuce leaf, top with the meat mixture, roll into a cylinder and enjoy.

Nutritional Information: Servings 4. Amount per serving: Calories 250, Total Fat 10g, Total Carbohydrate 17g, Protein 23g, Iron 5mg. The Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet, so your values may change depending on your calorie needs. The values here may not be 100% accurate because the recipes have not been professionally evaluated nor have they been evaluated by the U.S. FDA.

Iron Rich Food Recipe

Coconut Thai Green Curry

Sponsored by Dinner A'Fare

Serves 4; Can be altered for gluten free

Ingredients

- 3 lbs mussels, scrubbed clean and debearded
- 3 tbsp olive oil, plus more for brushing on bread
- 1/2 yellow onion diced
- 1 tbsp peeled and grated fresh ginger
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 Thai chili, finely sliced (red bird's eye chili is recommended, or you can substitute with another green chili)
- 2 tbsp fish sauce
- 3 tsp brown sugar
- 4-5 tbsp green curry paste
- 1 13-oz can coconut milk
- A pinch of salt
- 1 loaf of crusty bread
- 1 bunch of cilantro, chopped
- 1 lime, cut into wedges



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to broil.
2. Heat a large stovetop pot and 3 tablespoons of olive oil to medium high heat. Add the onion and a pinch of salt and cook for 3-4 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger and chili. Cook for 30 seconds.
3. Stir in the brown sugar, green curry paste, and fish sauce and continue to stir until it is all dissolved. About 1 minute.
4. Pour in the coconut milk and bring to a simmer. Add the mussels and stir them into the sauce. Cover pot with a lid and cook mussels for 8-10 minutes or until mussels are cooked and open.
5. While mussels are cooking, slice the bread and brush one side with olive oil. Toast in oven on broil for 1 minute or until browned.
6. Discard any mussels that have not opened and separate the mussels into 4 bowls.
7. Ladle coconut broth over mussels and sprinkle chopped cilantro on top. Serve mussels with crusty bread and lime wedges.

Nutritional Information: Servings 3. Amount per serving: Calories 569, % Daily Value Total Fat 27g (41%), Saturated Fat 21g (105%), Monounsaturated Fat 0g, Polyunsaturated Fat 0g, Trans Fat 0g, Cholesterol 63mg (21%), Sodium 1611mg (67%), Potassium 1213mg (35%), Total Carbohydrate 48g (16%), Dietary Fiber 4g (15%), Sugars 11g, Protein 37g (75%), Vitamin A (47%), Vitamin C (368%), Calcium (14%), Iron (26%).*

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Iron Rich Food Recipe

Green Protein Power Bowl

Sponsored by Herbalife Nutrition

Serves 1

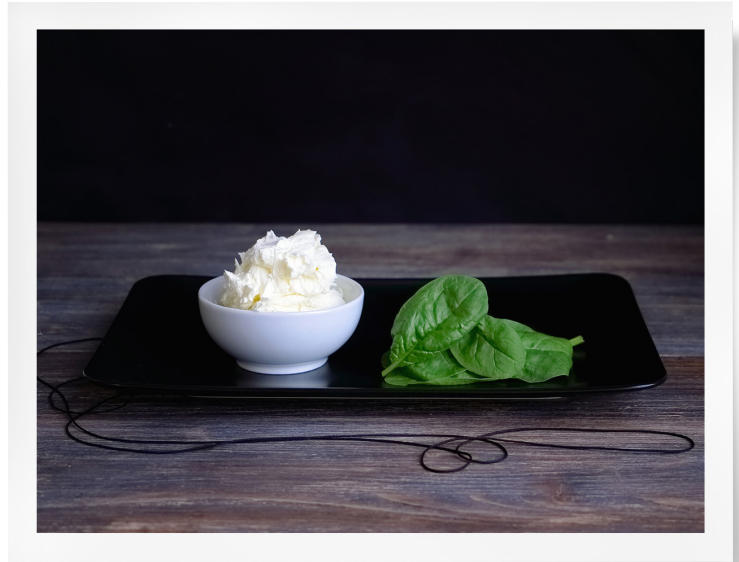
Ingredients

- 6 cups raw baby spinach
- 2 tsp olive oil, divided
- ½ cup low-fat cottage cheese
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 eggs
- 2 tbsp low-fat feta cheese

Instructions

1. Place spinach in a microwave-safe bowl that is just large enough to contain the spinach. Drizzle with 1 teaspoon olive oil.
2. Spread cottage cheese over the spinach, then sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Microwave on high for about 2 minutes, until spinach is wilted and cottage cheese is warm.
3. In a small frying pan (preferably nonstick), heat remaining teaspoon of olive oil over medium high heat. Add eggs and cook until set on the bottom, then turn over and finish cooking to desired doneness.
4. Slide eggs on top of spinach-cottage cheese mixture, sprinkle with feta cheese.

Nutritional Information: Servings 1. Amount per serving: Calories 410, Total Fat 24g, Total Carbohydrate 12g, Protein 34g, Iron 7mg
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Iron Rich Food Recipe

Pork Tenderloin with Coconut Lentils and Spinach

Sponsored by Dinner A'Fare

Serves 4-6; Gluten free

Ingredients

1.5 lb. pork tenderloin

Pork Tenderloin Rub:

1/4 tsp salt

1/4 tsp garlic salt

1/8 tsp cayenne powder

1/4 tsp chili powder

1/4 tsp onion powder

1/2 tsp black pepper

Lentils:

1 cup lentils

1 cup coconut milk (canned)

2 cups water

2 chicken base boullion cubes

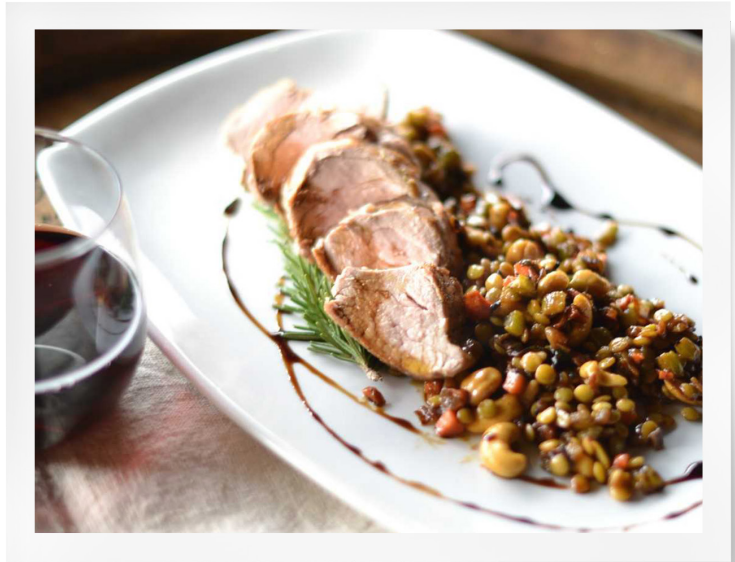
Spinach:

1 lb. fresh spinach

1/4 cup onion, diced

2 tsp garlic, diced

Salt & pepper to taste



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a small bowl, combine all rub ingredients and rub all over pork tenderloin. Marinate tenderloin for 10-30 minutes in the refrigerator. Place tenderloin on a baking sheet and cook for 30-40 minutes or until a meat thermometer reaches 145 degrees. Let the meat rest for 3-5 minutes, then serve.
2. While pork is cooking, heat a pot on the stove at medium high heat. Add lentils, bouillon cubes, coconut milk and water and bring to a simmer. Cover and cook for 15-20 minutes or until lentils are fork tender.
3. Heat a stovetop skillet and 1 tablespoon olive oil on medium heat. Sauté garlic for 30 seconds or until slightly brown. Add onions and sauté for 2 minutes. Add spinach and cook until spinach is wilted, but still bright green. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve sliced tenderloin over lentils and spinach.

Nutritional Information: Servings 5. Amount per serving: Calories 460, % Daily Value* Total Fat 16.9g (22%), Saturated Fat 11.9g (60%), Cholesterol 99mg (33%), Sodium 474mg (21%), Potassium 284mg (8%), Total Carbohydrate 29.2g (2%), Dietary Fiber 14g (50%), Total Sugars 3.4g, Protein 48.2g, Vitamin D 0mg (0%), Calcium 93mg (7%), Iron 7mg (37%), Potassium 1268mg (27%).

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Iron Rich Food Recipe

Shrimp & Grits with Bourbon Red Eye Gravy

Sponsored by Dinner A'Fare

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 1.5 lbs. shrimp (41-50 count, tail on, peeled and deveined)
- 2 tbsp blackening seasoning
- 2 cups grits
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp chicken base
- ¼ tsp pepper
- 1 cup shredded white cheddar cheese
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 2 tbsp bourbon
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 tsp flour (To make this recipe gluten-free, substitute all-purpose gluten-free flour or cornstarch)
- 1½ tsp instant coffee crystals
- 1 tsp ham base

Instructions

1. Bring a stovetop pot, 6 cups of water and 1 tablespoon olive oil to a simmer.
2. Stir in grits, chicken base and pepper and cook 5-10 or until slightly thickened. Stir in cheddar cheese and heavy cream. Cover pot and remove from heat.
3. Rinse and drain shrimp, pat dry with a paper towel. Toss shrimp in blackening seasoning. (You can toss them together in a Ziploc bag.)
4. Heat a stovetop skillet to medium heat with 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Sauté shrimp for 5-6 minutes or until opaque.
5. Remove cooked shrimp from skillet and add 2 cups of water, bourbon, brown sugar, butter, flour, coffee and ham base. Simmer for 5-10 minutes until it's a thicker sauce, stirring often.
6. Serve shrimp on top of grits and red eye gravy.

Nutritional Information: Servings 6. Amount per serving: Calories 371, % Daily Value* Total Fat 18g (28%), Saturated Fat 10g (48%), Monounsaturated Fat 4g, Polyunsaturated Fat 1g, Trans Fat 0g, Cholesterol 45mg (15%), Sodium 1504mg (63%), Potassium 289mg (8%), Total Carbohydrate 34g (11%), Dietary Fiber 1g (6%), Sugars 4g, Protein 32g (64%), Vitamin A (22%), Vitamin C (5%), Calcium (35%), Iron (72%).

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Iron Rich Food Recipe

Slow Cooker Chickpea Curry

Sponsored by Herbalife Nutrition

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 package firm cubed tofu (14 oz.), drained
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 medium size onion, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup light coconut milk
- 1 cup tomato puree
- 1 tbsp garam masala
- 1 tbsp curry powder
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 15-ounce can garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/8 cup cilantro, finely chopped



Instructions

1. Remove the tofu from the package and rinse. Wrap tofu in several paper towels and place on a cutting board. Position a small plate on top of the tofu, then place something heavy on the plate (like a can of beans or tomatoes) for about 15 minutes. This will remove some of the excess liquid from the tofu.
2. In a saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat and add the onion. Cook until soft and translucent, about 3 minutes. Add in the garlic and stir to combine. Whisk in the coconut milk, tomato puree, garam masala, curry powder, chili powder, ground ginger and a pinch salt and pepper. Cook until slightly thick, about 5 minutes.
3. While the sauce is cooking, finely cube the tofu. Place the tofu and garbanzo beans in the base of slow cooker. Pour the sauce on top. Cook on low for 4-5 hours until thick.
4. Before serving, stir in the cilantro. Serve with brown rice.

Nutritional Information: Servings 4. Amount per serving: Calories 300, Total Fat 13g, Total Carbohydrate 33g, Protein 17g, Iron 6mg.

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Iron Rich Food Recipe

South of the Border Sizzling Beef Fajitas

Sponsored by Herbalife Nutrition

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 2 tsp ground cumin (divided)
- 1 tsp ground chili powder, or to taste
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 ¼ lbs lean beef steak (flank steak or top sirloin recommended)
- 2 tbsp olive oil, divide
- 2 tbsp. lime juice
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (or 1 tsp. garlic powder) (divided)
- 1 large yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 red bell pepper, seeds removed and thinly sliced
- 1 green bell pepper, seeds removed and thinly sliced
- 1 medium avocado, peeled and sliced
- Prepared tomato salsa
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro (optional)
- 8-9 corn tortillas

Instructions

1. Combine 1 teaspoon ground cumin, chili powder and salt in a small bowl. Rub spice mix over the surface of the flank steak. Place in a flat dish covered dish. In a small bowl, mix together 1 tbsp of the olive oil, lime juice, Worcestershire sauce and half of the minced garlic. Pour half of this marinade over the meat and set the other half aside. Turn to coat both sides. Cover meat with plastic wrap and let marinate in the refrigerator for several hours or overnight.
2. Heat remaining tablespoon of oil in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the onions and cook for several minutes, stirring, until they begin to soften. Add the bell peppers and cook for several more minutes until peppers are soft.
3. Turn heat down to low and add the other half of the garlic and the remaining teaspoon of cumin. Stir until vegetables are softened and starting to caramelize, about 5-6 minutes. Pour in the remaining marinade and stir for a minute or two. Cover and remove from heat.
4. Remove meat from marinade and pat dry, if necessary, using a paper towel. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add remaining tablespoon of oil to the skillet. Cook the flank steak 3-4 minutes on each side, until medium rare. When meat is cooked, transfer to a cutting board, cover with foil and let rest for 10 minutes.
5. Thinly slice meat across the grain into strips. Toss meat and any juices from the cutting board into the pan with the cooked vegetables. Spoon meat-vegetable mixture into tortillas and top with avocado, prepared tomato salsa, and cilantro.

Nutritional Information: Servings 4. Amount per serving: Calories 445, Total Fat 17g, Total Carbohydrate 33g, Protein 37g, Iron 4.5mg.

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Iron Rich Food Recipe

Steak Diane

Sponsored by Dinner A'Fare

Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients

- 1.5 lbs bistro steak
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp kosher salt
- ¼ tsp fresh ground black pepper
- 1 cup red wine
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped (or 1 tbsp chopped garlic)
- 2 tsp beef base
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ cup heavy cream



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Place bistro steak in a shallow dish and season with salt and pepper on both sides. Brush Dijon mustard and olive oil on both sides and marinate in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
3. Heat vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook steak 6-8 minutes per side for medium-rare. Remove steak from skillet and loosely cover with foil. Let rest 10 minutes.
4. While steak rests, in the same skillet add butter and garlic and sauté for 1 minute. Add in red wine, balsamic vinegar, tomato paste, beef base, Worcestershire sauce and water and stir to combine. Bring a boil for 30 seconds then reduce to medium low heat and simmer until sauce is reduced by half. Add in heavy cream and stir to combine.
5. Slice steak and serve with sauce.

Nutritional Information: Servings 4. Amount per serving: Calories 333, % Daily Value* Total Fat 13.5g (17%), Saturated Fat 3.8g (19%), Cholesterol 23mg (8%), Sodium 974mg (38%), Total Carbohydrate 39g (14%), Dietary Fiber 5g (18%), Sugars 8g, Protein 14.8g, Potassium (19%), Calcium (17%), Iron (19%)

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How Your Blood Donation May Be Used

The Red Cross provides about 40% of our nation's blood and blood components, all from generous volunteer donors. But supply can't always meet demand because only about 3% of age-eligible people donate blood yearly. Each new donor helps us meet patient needs.

- Each year, an estimated 6.8 million people in the U.S. donate blood.
- 13.6 million whole blood and red blood cells are collected in the U.S. in a year.
- About 45% of people in the U.S. have Group O (positive or negative) blood; the proportion is higher among Hispanics (57%) and African Americans (51%).
- Type O negative red cells can be given to patients of all blood types. Because only 7% of people in the U.S. are type O negative, it's always in great demand and often in short supply.
- Type AB positive plasma can be transfused to patients of all blood types. Since only 3% of people in the U.S. have AB positive blood, this plasma is usually in short supply.
- Red blood cells must be used within 42 days (or less).
- Platelets must be used within just 5 days.

[**Click here to schedule to donate.**](#)