

Tri-Tip Doneness Chart ★

Pull temps, final temps, and the rest that makes them work.

QUICK ANSWER

Pull at 125 to 130°F for medium-rare. Rest 10 to 15 minutes uncovered.
Carryover heat settles it at 130 to 135°F, where tri-tip is at its best.

DONENESS	PULL TEMP	FINAL TEMP	COLOR / FEEL
Rare	120–122°F	125°F	Deep red center, cold core Very lean cuts only
Medium-rare	125–130°F	130–135°F	Warm red center, edges pink The Santa Maria standard
Medium	135–138°F	140–145°F	Pink fading to brown Starts losing the buttery quality
Medium-well	145°F*	150°F	Slight pink, mostly brown USDA minimum, noticeably drier
Well done	155°F+	160°F+	No pink, firm throughout Not recommended

PULL TEMP BY METHOD

Direct grill pull 130°F flip often over hot coals	Reverse sear sear to 128–130°F smoke at 225°F to 115°F first	Oven roast pull 130°F 425°F, gentler carryover	Sous vide 131°F bath 2 to 4 hours, then sear hard
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THREE RULES THAT DO MOST OF THE WORK

1. Probe the thickest part from the side, past the fat seam. Trust the lowest of two or three readings.
2. Rest 10 to 15 minutes uncovered before slicing. Skip it and the juice ends up on the board.
3. The grain changes direction mid-cut. Split at the seam, slice each half across its own grain.

*USDA guideline: 145°F with a 3-minute rest for whole-muscle beef. Cooking for pregnant guests, young children, or anyone immunocompromised? Use 145°F. Below that number, use a reliable instant-read and quality beef from a trusted source.

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