

FOOD

## Front Burner

FLORENCE FABRICANT

### To Age: Keeping Your Beef at Its Best



Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

Sealed in a special wrapper and refrigerated, your slab of beef is supposed to take on the characteristics of restaurant-quality dry-aged meat. I needed convincing, so I gave the Umai Dry system a try with help from David Liederman, a chef whose home fridge is larger than mine. He cut a 19-pound whole boneless rib-eye in two and put half into the Umai Dry bag made of textured polymer film and closed it with the kit's vacuum sealer. The rest was left unwrapped. He placed both slabs on racks in the refrigerator. After three weeks, Mr. Liederman cut the meat into steaks, seared them and served them side by side, unlabeled, to a group of eight skeptical food lovers. Everyone preferred the steaks that had been treated in the Umai Dry system, citing their richer, more complex and developed flavor. The other meat just tasted "younger," as one guest put it. But the process demands refrigerator space; you can only use large sub-primal sections of meat, not individual portions. And the meat loses at least a quarter of its weight in the process; after those three weeks, our 19 pounds were down to 14. The kit, made in Minneapolis, can also be used to make charcuterie: *Umai Dry Artisan Meat Kit, \$170, [drybagsteak.com](http://drybagsteak.com).*