

Julia Child's Beef Bourguignon...

Ever seen the movie Julie & Julia? A foodie must see... Where the main character, Julie aspires to cook all 524 recipes out of the great Julia Child's recipe book, within 365 days. She blogs about her journey and all the recipes as she goes along, earning herself a lot of followers and media attention, resulting in a reporter wanting to run a story on her. Julie is so excited and decides to make Julia Child's Beef Bourguignon for the interview. This dish requires up to 4 hours of stewing and when Julie oversleeps and burns the first batch, my heart broke for her at the prospect of having to start from scratch.

Experiencing a cold winter in the Southern Hemisphere at the moment, this king of all stews, seemed like just the meal to conjure up a few weeks ago, and that's exactly what I did... having started rather late in the afternoon, I opted to serve it the following evening instead. Always a good idea with a stew, because that old wives tale about stews and curries always tasting better the next day is 100% true! Leaving the food over night, allows all the flavours to mingle, fall in love and hold hands, resulting in love at first bite! Don't eat this alone, it's a master piece worth sharing with a few good friends and a (few) good bottles of wine !

Julia Child's Beef Bourguignon

Yield: 6

Ingredients:

150g streaky bacon

3 tbsp olive oil

1.4kg lean stewing steak cut into 2 inch cubes

1 chopped carrot

1 chopped onion

1 tsp salt

28g flour

¼ tsp pepper

700ml good quality red wine

1tbsp tomato paste

570ml brown beef stock

2 cloves mashed garlic

1/2 tsp fresh thyme

A crumbled bay leaf

18 to 24 small onions, brown-braised – see recipe

450gm baby button mushrooms, sautéed – see recipe

Method:

Remove rind and cut bacon into lardons (sticks, 1/4 inch thick and 1½ inches long). Simmer rind and bacon for 10 minutes in 1.4 liters of water. Drain and dry.

Preheat oven to 230 degrees

Sauté the bacon in the oil over a moderate heat for 2 to 3 minutes to brown lightly. Remove to a side dish with a slotted spoon. Reheat casserole dish until fat is almost smoking before you sauté the beef. Dry the beef, it will not brown if damp. Sauté a few pieces at a time, in the hot oil & bacon fat unit nicely browned on all sides. Add it to the bacon. In the same fat, brown the sliced vegetables. Pour out the sautéing fat if any remains. Return the beef and bacon to the casserole & toss with salt & pepper. Sprinkle on the flour and toss again to coat the beef lightly.

Place casserole uncovered in the middle of the preheated oven for 4 minutes. Toss the meat and return to oven for 4 minutes more. (This browns the flour and covers the meat with a light crust). Remove casserole, & turn oven down to 170c.

Stir in the wine and enough stock so that the meat is barely covered. Add the tomato paste, garlic, herbs & blanched bacon rind. Bring to a simmer on top of the stove. Cover the casserole & place in lower part of pre-heated oven. Regulate heat so that liquid simmers very slowly for 3 to 4 hours. The meat is done when a fork pierces it easily.

While the beef is cooking, prepare the onions as follows:

Ingredients:

18 - 24 peeled baby onions

55grms butter

1 tbsp oil

145ml brown stock / red wine or water

Salt & pepper to taste

1 medium herb bouquet (4 parsley sprigs, 1/2 bay leaf, and a few sprigs of thyme tied in string)

Method:

When the butter and oil are bubbling in the frying pan, add the onions and sauté over a moderate heat for about 10 minutes, rolling the onions about so that they will brown as evenly as possible. be careful not to break their skins. You cannot expect to brown them uniformly.

Pour in the liquid, season to taste, and add the herb bouquet. Cover and simmer slowly for 40 - 50 minutes until the onions are perfectly tender but retain their shape, and the liquid has evaporated. Remove herb bouquet. Leave onions aside until called for later in the recipe.

Now sauté your mushrooms as follows:

Ingredients:

30ml butter

1 tbsp oil

450gm button mushrooms, washed, well dried

Method:

Place the frying pan over a high heat with the butter and oil. As soon as you see that the butter foam has begun to subside, indicating that it is hot enough, add the mushrooms. Toss and shake the pan for 4 - 5 minutes. During this the mushrooms will at first absorb the fat. In 2 to 3 minutes the fat will reappear on their surface, and the mushrooms will begin to brown. As soon as they have browned lightly, remove from the heat. Leave aside until called for later in the recipe.

When the meat is tender, pour the contents of the casserole into a sieve placed over a saucepan. Wash out the casserole & return the beef and bacon to it. Distribute the cooked onions & mushrooms over the meat. Skim fat off the sauce & simmer sauce for a minute or two, skimming off additional fat as it rises. You should have about 570ml of sauce thick enough to coat a spoon

lightly. If too thin, boil it down rapidly. if too thick, mix in a few tablespoons of stock. Season to taste.

Pour the sauce over the meat & vegetables. Cover the casserole & simmer for 2 to 3 minutes. Basting the meat & vegetables with the sauce several times. Serve in its casserole with a side of your choice, I like to serve with silky smooth mash potato... hmhhh YUM!