



Singing Praises for Stews & Braises & Carbonnade à la Flamande – Beer Braised Beef & Onions

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It's taken a while for summer to throw in the towel and call it quits. Except for the more-than-too-much rain, the warm weather has been great. But of course it had to end. After wondering if the leaves would ever change, a few cold nights have turned the hills from green to crimson and gold. The first frost has come and gone and there will be many more before the first snow flies. It looks like it may finally be time to put away the shorts and t-shirts until next summer.



And for foodies, chilly nights can only mean one thing. It's time to find your favorite stew pot, casserole or Dutch oven and whip up some warm and cozy comfort food. Who doesn't love a homey dinner of low-and-slow cooked goodness?

Whether it's beef that's braising or chicken stewing, these one-pot wonders are perfect for overworked, multitasking mavens. Once dinner is in the oven you'll have plenty of time to take care of any one of the countless tasks that fill your days (and nights.) While the pot bubbles you can finish the laundry, answer emails and make or take one last phone call. If you like, double the recipe and cross another dinner off your to-do list later in the week.

Braises and stews are also great for entertaining. As much as we all love a summer cookout, there's always a last minute juggle and mad dash to make sure everyone is well-fed and happy. Let's face it; getting dinner on and off the grill can be a bit of an adventure when you've got a big, hungry crowd to feed. Half your guests want their steaks rare and the other half medium. And there's always one odd duck who insists you cook it until it's almost cinders and tough as shoe leather.

Happily, there are no special orders to worry about when you are serving, Nana's Yankee Pot Roast, coq au vin or a vegetarian tagine. Unless of course, you mixed up your guest lists and invited your vegetarian cousin for pot roast or carnivorous neighbor for veggie stew. But that's a whole 'nother mess to figure out.

While dinner gently bubbles in the oven, you can have fun at your own dinner party. Gather around the fire for a chat or pile in front of the television to watch the game. Or maybe a little bit both. With little or no last minute rush and bother, you can relax and enjoy your guests. It's great not to worry about the game going into overtime or a late arrival ruining dinner. Just turn the oven way down and add a touch more cooking liquid (beer for today's recipe) to the pot if needed. Your beautiful braise or stew can almost always wait until that last touchdown has been scored or a late guest breezes in.

Make no mistake; comfort food doesn't have to be ordinary or timid. As much as everyone loves your old fashioned chicken and dumplings, it's fun to flex your culinary muscles. You can find inspiration in every corner of the globe. Why not fill your kitchen with the warmth and spice of a Belgian, Moroccan or Indian feast?

Celebrate the change of seasons by tracking down your favorite tried and true recipes or experimenting with a new one.

Enjoy a relaxing evening with friends and family and bon appétit!

Carbonnade à la Flamande – Beer Braised Beef & Onions

Relax with your guests while traditional Belgian comfort food simmers in the oven. This dish is even better made a day or two ahead. Enjoy!

Serves 8-10

4 ounces thick cut bacon, chopped*
About 5 pounds boneless chuck or London broil, about 2-inches thick
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
3-4 large onions, cut in half and then into 1/4-inch wedges
2 carrots, finely chopped
2 stalks celery, finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon brown sugar
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
3-4 cups beer
1-2 cups chicken stock
3-4 sprigs fresh thyme or 1 teaspoon dried
2 bay leaves



Cook the bacon in a heavy casserole over medium heat until crisp. Remove the bacon and reserve. Pour off all but 1-2 tablespoons of bacon fat and reserve.

Season the beef with salt and pepper. Raise the heat to medium-high and brown the beef, 3-5 minutes per side. Remove the beef and reserve.

Add a little more bacon fat to the pot if necessary. Add the onions, carrots and celery. Season with allspice, salt and pepper and toss to combine. Reduce the heat to medium and cook the vegetables, stirring occasionally, until the onions are lightly browned, about 30 minutes. Stir in the garlic, mustard, sugar and vinegar and cook for 5 minutes more.



Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.

Add 3 cups of beer, 1 cup of chicken stock and the thyme and bay leaves to the onions. Raise the heat to medium-high and bring to a boil. Return the beef and bacon to the pot and bring to a simmer. The beef should be completely submerged in the liquid, add more beer and/or stock if it's not.

Cover and transfer the pot to the oven. Turning the meat once or twice, cook at 325 degrees until the meat is very tender, 2-2 1/2 hours. Add more beer and/or chicken stock if necessary.

Transfer the beef to a cutting board and let it sit, loosely covered, for 20 minutes. Skim the excess fat from the sauce and discard the thyme twigs and bay leaves. Return the pot to the oven to keep the onions and sauce warm. Slice the beef and serve with onions and sauce.

** If you like, you can skip the bacon. Sear the beef and sauté vegetables in a little olive oil.*

You can make this dish in advance (up to 3 days). Cool to room temperature, skim the excess fat and store covered in the refrigerator. Bring the pot to a simmer over medium heat and then transfer to a 325 degree oven for 30 minutes or until the sauce is bubbling and the beef is warmed through.

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