

Beef Burgundy

This dish, while time-consuming to make, is worth every minute. It's chunky enough to eat with a fork, and you will have everyone hoping for more. Yes, in the end, it's just beef stew, but that's like saying an F16 is just an airplane. Serve this with some crusty French bread and a hearty red wine.

Serves 6

Ingredients for Bouquet Garni

- 6 oz salt pork, or meaty, thick cut, bacon
- Cheesecloth (doubled), about 18" square
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 8 large cloves of garlic, crushed
- 2 large bay leaves, crumbled
- ½ tsp black peppercorns
- ½ oz of dried mushrooms

Ingredients for Stew

- 4 pounds boneless beef chuck roast
- Coarse salt & freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup water for deglazing
- 4 Tbs butter
- ½ cup white flour
- 1¾ cup home-made beef broth (if you have it), or low sodium chicken broth, if you don't.
- 1 bottle (750 ml) good Pinot Noir wine
- 1½ cups water
- 1 tsp tomato paste

Ingredients for Vegetables

- 8 oz frozen pearl onions, or fresh pearl onions blanched and peeled
- 8 oz small mushrooms, trimmed
- 8 oz carrots, cut into 1" chunks
- 1½ Tbs butter
- 1½ Tbs sugar
- ¾ tsp salt
- ¾ cup water
- 2 Tbs brandy or cognac
- 3 Tbs fresh parsley, minced

Instructions for Stew

1. Skip this step if using bacon. Remove the rind from the salt pork and cut into 4 pieces. Boil both the rind and the salt pork in 3 cups of water for a few minutes, then drain off the water.
2. Make a bouquet garni. Spread out the cheesecloth. Place on it the rind from the salt pork (skip if you are using bacon), parsley, thyme, onions, carrots, garlic, bay leaves, peppercorns, and mushrooms on

the cheesecloth. Fold up the edges and tie at the top with kitchen string to make a neat bundle. Place in a heavy, lidded oven-proof dish (hereafter, "Dutch oven").

3. Make lardons and fat. Cut salt pork or bacon into ¼"x¼"x1" pieces ("lardons") and fry in a heavy skillet over medium heat until they are light brown and crisp. Remove the lardons to the Dutch oven. Spoon off all but 2 Tbs of the rendered fat and save it.
4. Brown the beef. Cut the chuck roast into large pieces (1¼" to 1½" cubes) trimming away all membranes, silver skin and any large pockets of fat. Season the meat generously with salt and pepper. Place the beef cubes into the skillet, leaving plenty of space around each one so that they brown and don't steam. Raise the heat to high. Fry for about 2 minutes and then turn the cubes with a fork or tongs as soon as one side is good and brown. Repeat on at least 2 other sides (about 8 minutes total). Remove the beef pieces and place them in the Dutch oven as they get fully brown. When the skillet is empty, add a half-cup of water and deglaze, scraping with a wooden spoon to loosen all the stuck-on brown bits. Pour the resulting liquid into the Dutch oven. If the pan is still messy, wash it out. Repeat as often as necessary, with the remaining beef cubes, using the reserved fat from step 3. Note that if at any point you need more fat, you can use additional bacon fat or olive oil.
Note: Be careful not to let the fat burn when browning the beef. If it looks like it might burn, immediately remove the pan from the heat, take the beef out, and deglaze with some water, scraping off any brown bits from the pan. If the resulting liquid does not smell charred, you can add it to the Dutch oven. If it smells like charcoal or has lots of black bits in it, throw the liquid away. In either case reheat the pan with more fat and continue browning the remaining beef.
5. Make a roux. In the same now-empty skillet that you used to brown the beef, melt the butter and heat until foaming. Then add the white flour and stir with a whisk until you have a smooth paste. If the mixture is too clumpy, add a little bacon fat or olive oil to smooth it out. If it is too runny, add a little more flour. Continue constant whisking, making sure to frequently scrape the edges of the pan, until the mixture is the color of peanut butter and has a nice toasty aroma, about 5 minutes. Then whisk in your broth adding extra water as necessary to keep the roux smooth. Simmer, stirring frequently until you have a thick, smooth sauce. Remove it from the heat and add to the Dutch oven.
6. Cook the stew. Pre-heat oven to 300 degrees. Add 3 cups of wine, 1½ cups water, and the tomato paste to the Dutch oven. Place it on the stove, stir to combine all the ingredients, and heat until just boiling. Then put the bouquet garni and use a spoon to make sure it is sitting on the bottom of the dish and almost completely submerged in liquid. If needed, you can add a little more water. Cover the Dutch oven and place it in the oven for about 3½ hours. Check on it every 45 minutes or so, and add water if it looks like too much has evaporated. At the end of cooking, the meat should be fork-tender.
7. Reduce the sauce. Take the bouquet garni out of the Dutch oven, place it in a clean bowl. Take the meat out of the sauce with a slotted spoon and set aside. Wait about 15 minutes and then, if there is a noticeable layer of fat on the sauce, skim it off with a shallow spoon. Then squeeze out all the liquid you can from the now-cooled bouquet garni and add it to the sauce. Bring the sauce to a boil and then reduce to a brisk simmer. Stir frequently and allow the sauce to reduce down to about 3 cups, about 20 minutes, during which time you can make the vegetables. When the sauce is done, it should have the consistency of heavy cream.
8. Make the vegetables. Boil the chopped carrots in water for about 3 minutes. Then drain the water and put the pearl onions, carrots, butter, sugar, salt, and water in a heavy skillet and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer until the onions are tender (this should only take a minute or so if the onions were previously frozen). Then uncover, increase the heat to high and simmer until almost all the liquid is gone, about 3 minutes. Add the mushrooms and a little more salt and continue to cook stirring frequently until the mushrooms release their liquid, and all the vegetables are nicely glazed, about another 5 minutes. Remove the vegetables to a bowl, deglaze the skillet with a little water and then add this liquid to the sauce still reducing in step 7.

9. Prepare for serving. With your sauce now the consistency of heavy cream, reduce the heat to low. Add the beef and vegetables to the sauce, along with any accumulated juices, the remaining wine, and brandy. Cover the Dutch oven and simmer on the stove until everything is nicely heated, about 5 minutes. Then serve in wide-bottom soup plates and garnish with fresh parsley.