Beef stew is best cooked low and slow to tenderize the meat and develop deep flavors. Typically, it takes about 2 to 3 hours of simmering on the stovetop or in a slow cooker. During this time, the beef becomes melt-in-your-mouth tender, and the vegetables absorb the rich broth. Using tougher cuts like chuck or brisket is ideal, as the long cooking breaks down connective tissue, resulting in a hearty, satisfying meal.