

OXTAIL STEW

Serves 4 to 6.

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from several classic recipes.

Oxtail is the tail of a steer here in the USA. It is typically sectioned by cutting between the bones. Although the pieces contain a lot of fat, the meat is quite flavorful. The texture can be tough; it therefore benefits from long slow braising in broth. When cooked properly, the meat is tender enough to fall off the bones.



Ingredients:

4½ to 5 pounds (about 2kg) oxtails, sectioned
Salt and pepper to season
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
4 tablespoons vegetable oil, such as corn oil or peanut oil, for frying
2 onions; divided
6 carrots; divided
4 celery stalks; divided
2 to 4 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups beef stock; more if needed
2 tablespoons tomato paste
Pinch of dry thyme or 2 to 3 fresh sprigs
6 sprigs fresh parsley
1 to 2 bay leaves
½ bottle of full-bodied dry red wine
1 russet potato

Directions:

Season the oxtails with salt and pepper and then dust with flour. Heat oil in a large skillet and brown the oxtails well on all sides. Transfer to a plate and cover. Set aside. Drain excess oil from the pan, but leave the fond (the brown bits in the bottom).

Dice one onion, 3 carrots, and 2 celery stalks. Mince the garlic. Add the vegetables and garlic to the pan and cook over medium heat about 5 minutes, scraping the bottom of the pan occasionally to deglaze it. Return the oxtails to the pan and add the beef stock, tomato paste, and herbs. Add the wine and stir to break up the tomato paste. Bring the liquid to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and cover the pan. Cook 3 hours. You can add more stock to the pan, as needed, if you prefer a greater quantity of soup.

Transfer the oxtails to a plate and cover. Strain the soup, discarding all the solids. Skim and discard the fat. Return the liquid to the pan.

Chop the remaining onion, carrots, and celery. Peel and chop the potato. Place the vegetables in the pan, return the liquid to a boil, and cook over medium-low heat, covered, about 5 minutes. Return the oxtails to the pan and cover. Cook until the potatoes are tender.

Serve in a large soup tureen or individually in bowls.

Although not traditional in this stew, I made buttermilk dumplings. See my recipe for Chicken and Dumplings for the dumpling recipe.

The step-by-step photos were removed. See the video for the preparation.