



Portuguese-Style Beef Stew (Alcatra)

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 17: Two Modern Stews

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Alcatra, a classic and simple Portuguese beef stew, features tender chunks of beef braised with onions, garlic, warm spices, and wine. Unlike beef stews that require searing the beef to build savory flavor or adding flavor boosters like tomato paste and anchovies, this recipe skips those steps and ingredients, highlighting the warm and bright flavors of the spices and wine as much as the meatiness of the beef. We use beef shank because it is lean (which means the cooking liquid doesn't need to be skimmed) and full of collagen, which breaks down into gelatin and gives the sauce body. Submerging the sliced onions in the liquid causes them to form a meaty-tasting compound called MMP that enhances the savory flavor of the broth.

Serves 6

Beef shank is sold both long-cut and crosscut (with and without bones). We prefer long-cut since it has more collagen. You can substitute 4 pounds of bone-in crosscut shank if that's all you can find. Remove the bones before cooking and save them for another use. Crosscut shank cooks more quickly, so check the stew for doneness in step 2 after 3 hours. A 3 1/2- to 4-pound chuck roast, trimmed of fat and cut into 2 1/2-inch pieces, can be substituted for the shank. Serve this dish with crusty bread or boiled potatoes.

INGREDIENTS

- 3** pounds boneless long-cut beef shanks
- Salt and pepper
- 5** garlic cloves, peeled and smashed
- 5** allspice berries
- 4** bay leaves
- 1 1/2** teaspoons peppercorns
- 2** large onions, halved and sliced
- 2 1/4** cups dry white wine
- 1/4** teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 8** ounces Spanish-style chorizo sausage, cut into 1/4-inch-thick rounds

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Trim away any fat or large pieces of connective tissue from exterior of shanks (silverskin can be left on meat). Cut each shank crosswise into 2 1/2-inch pieces. Sprinkle meat with 1 teaspoon salt.
- 2.** Cut 8-inch square of triple-thickness cheesecloth. Place garlic, allspice berries, bay leaves, and peppercorns in center of cheesecloth and tie into bundle with kitchen twine. Arrange onions and spice bundle in Dutch oven in even layer. Add wine and cinnamon. Arrange shank pieces in single layer on top of onions. Cover and cook until beef is tender, about 3 1/2 hours.
- 3.** Remove pot from oven and add chorizo. Using tongs, flip each piece of beef over, making sure that chorizo is submerged. Cover and let stand until chorizo is warmed through, about 20 minutes. Discard spice bundle. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

TECHNIQUE

SAVE THOSE MARROWBONES

If you can find only bone-in crosscut beef shank for our Portuguese-Style Beef Stew (Alcatra), you'll need to remove the bones before you begin—but don't throw them out. When roasted, the marrow inside the bones softens and becomes richly flavored. Simply scoop it out and spread it on toasted bread for a decadent appetizer or side dish. Before roasting the marrowbones, we soak them in a brine and refrigerate them for up to two days. In addition to seasoning, brining dissolves proteins in the marrow that would otherwise turn an unattractive dark gray color during cooking.

TO ROAST THE MARROWBONES: Dissolve 1/4 cup salt in 2 quarts water, add bones to brine, and refrigerate until marrow turns creamy in color, 1 to 2 days. Arrange bones cut side down on foil-lined baking sheet and roast on middle rack in 350-degree oven until skewer inserted in marrow slides in and out with ease, 20 to 25 minutes.

SOAK: Brining the bones for one to two days in a saltwater solution seasons the marrow and prevents it from turning an unappealing gray when roasted.



ROAST: Just 20 to 25 minutes on the middle rack in a 350-degree oven will soften the marrow so it's easy to scoop out and spread on toast.

