

Beef Carbonnade

Serves 6

Top blade steaks (also called blade or flatiron steaks) are our first choice, but any boneless roast from the chuck will work. If you end up using a chuck roast, look for the chuck eye roast, an especially flavorful cut that can easily be trimmed and cut into 1 inch pieces. Buttered egg noodles or mashed potatoes make excellent accompaniments to carbonnade.

3 1/2 lbs top blade steaks, 1 inch thick, trimmed of gristle and fat and cut into 1 inch pieces

Table salt and ground black pepper

3 tablespoons vegetable oil

2 lbs yellow onions (about 4 medium), halved and sliced 1/4 inch thick

1 tablespoon tomato paste

2 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through a garlic press (about 2 teaspoons)

3 tablespoons unbleached all purpose flour

3/4 cup low sodium chicken broth

3/4 cup beef broth

1 1/2 cups (12 ounce bottle or can) dark beer or stout

4 sprigs fresh thyme, tied with kitchen twine

2 bay leaves

1 tablespoon cider vinegar

1. Adjust an oven rack to the lower middle position and heat the oven to 300 degrees. Dry the beef thoroughly with paper towels, then season generously with salt and pepper. Heat 2 teaspoons of the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium high heat until beginning to smoke; add about one third of the beef to the pot. Cook without moving the pieces until well browned, 2 to 3 minutes; using tongs, turn each piece and continue cooking until the second side is well browned, about 5 minutes longer. Transfer the browned beef to a medium bowl. Repeat with 2 teaspoons more oil and half of the remaining beef. (If the drippings in the bottom of the pot are very dark, add 1/2 cup of the chicken or beef broth and scrape the pan bottom with a wooden spoon to loosen the browned bits; pour the liquid into the bowl with the browned beef, then proceed). Repeat once more with 2 teaspoons more oil and the remaining beef.

2. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil to the now empty Dutch oven; reduce the heat to medium low. Add the onions, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and the tomato paste; cook, scraping the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon to loosen the browned bits, until the onions have released some moisture, about 5 minutes. Increase the heat to medium and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the onions are lightly browned, 12 to 14 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the flour and stir until the onions are evenly coated and the flour is lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Stir in the broths, scraping the pan bottom to loosen any browned bits; stir in the beer, thyme, bay leaves, vinegar, browned beef with any accumulated juices, and salt and pepper to taste. Increase the heat to medium high and bring to a full simmer, stirring occasionally; cover partially, then place the pot in the oven. Cook until a fork inserted into the beef meets little resistance, 2 to 2 1/2 hours.

3. Discard the thyme and bay leaves. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve. (The stew can be cooled and refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 4 days; reheat over medium low heat).