

Catalan-Style Beef Stew with Mushrooms

From America's Test Kitchen episode: *A Taste of Spain*.

Serves 4 to 6

Remove the woody base of the oyster mushroom stem before cooking. An equal amount of quartered button mushrooms may be substituted for the oyster mushrooms. Serve the stew with boiled or mashed potatoes or rice.

INGREDIENTS

STEW

- 2** tablespoons olive oil
- 2** large onions, chopped fine
- 1/2** teaspoon sugar
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 2** plum tomatoes, halved lengthwise, pulp grated on large holes of box grater, and skins discarded
- 1** teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1** bay leaf
- 1 1/2** cups dry white wine
- 1 1/2** cups water
- 1** large sprig fresh thyme
- 1/4** teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 1/2** pounds boneless beef short ribs, trimmed and cut into 2-inch cubes

PICADA

- 1/4** cup whole blanched almonds
- 2** tablespoons olive oil
- 1** slice hearty white sandwich bread, crust removed, torn into 1-inch pieces

- 2** garlic cloves, peeled
- 3** tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1/2** pound oyster mushrooms, trimmed
- 1** teaspoon sherry vinegar

INSTRUCTIONS

1. FOR THE STEW: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 300 degrees. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium-low heat until shimmering. Add onions, sugar, and ½ teaspoon salt; cook, stirring often, until onions are deeply caramelized, 30 to 40 minutes. Add tomatoes, smoked paprika, and bay leaf; cook, stirring often, until darkened and thick, 5 to 10 minutes.

2. Add wine, water, thyme, and cinnamon to pot, scraping up any browned bits. Season beef with 1½ teaspoons salt and ½ teaspoon pepper and add to pot. Increase heat to high and bring to simmer. Transfer to oven and cook, uncovered. After 1 hour stir stew to redistribute meat, return to oven, and continue to cook uncovered until meat is tender, 1½ to 2 hours longer.

3. FOR THE PICADA: While stew is in oven, heat almonds and 1 tablespoon oil in 10-inch skillet over medium heat; cook, stirring often, until almonds are golden brown, 3 to 6 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer almonds to food processor. Return now-empty skillet to medium heat, add bread, and cook, stirring often, until toasted, 2 to 4 minutes; transfer to food processor with almonds. Add garlic and process until mixture is finely ground, about 20 seconds, scraping bowl as needed. Transfer mixture to bowl, stir in parsley, and set aside.

4. Return now-empty skillet to medium heat. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil until shimmering. Add mushrooms and ½ teaspoon salt; cook, stirring often, until tender, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer to bowl and set aside.

5. Remove bay leaf. Stir picada, mushrooms, and vinegar into stew. Season with salt and pepper. Serve.

TO MAKE AHEAD: Follow recipe through step 2 and refrigerate for up to 3 days. To serve, add 1 cup water and reheat over medium heat. Proceed with step 3.

TECHNIQUE

SHAKING UP STEW STANDARDS

To achieve the supremely beefy and complex flavor profile of Spanish beef stew, we learned a few new tricks—and gave up some long-held notions.

START WITH SOFRITO

A slow-cooked mixture of onions, tomatoes, spices, and herbs—known as *sofrito* in Spain—forms a flavor-packed base for the stew.



GO FOR WHITE WINE

We typically use red wine in beef stew. Here, we agreed with Spanish cooks that red wine competes with beefy flavor, so we reached for white instead.



SWAP THE ROAST FOR RIBS

Most stew recipes (including many of ours) call for chuck-eye roast. Boneless beef short ribs are even beefier-tasting and are easier to break down.



SKIP THE SEAR

By cooking the stew in the oven and leaving the pot uncovered, any part of the beef not submerged in liquid can brown, making searing unnecessary.



END WITH PICADA

A mixture of ground toasted bread, almonds, garlic, and parsley—the *picada*—stirred in before serving brightens the stew's flavor and thickens the broth.



America's Test Kitchen is a 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside of Boston. It is the home of *Cook's Country* and *Cook's Illustrated* magazines and is the workday destination for more than three dozen test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes until we understand how and why they work and arrive at the best version. We also test kitchen equipment and supermarket ingredients in search of brands that offer the best value and performance. You can watch us work by tuning in to *America's Test Kitchen* (www.americastestkitchen.com) on public television.