Rigatoni with beef and parsnip stracotto  
Recipe courtesy of Molto Batali (ecco 2011)  
  
Ragu  
  
1 pound boneless beef short ribs  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
½ cup all-purpose flour  
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil  
2 medium red onions, chopped into 1/2-inch dice  
4 parsnips, peeled and cur into 1/4 --inch dice  
4 garlic cloves  
2 salt-packed anchovy fillets, rinsed, drained, and dried  
2 cups Morellino di Scansano or other dry red wine from Tuscany  
1 cup basic tomato sauce (preferably Gia Russa brand)  
  
1 ½ pounds rigatoni pasta  
1 cup freshly grated Pecorino Toscano  
  
First make the ragu: Cut the beef into 1-inch cubes and season them all over with salt and pepper. Dredge the cubes lightly in the flour, shaking of the excess.   
  
In a large heavy-bottomed pot, heat the oil over medium heat until smoking. Working in the two batches, brown the beef cubes deeply on all sides until dark golden brown; this should take about 10 minutes per batch, but do not rush or the pan will scorch the flour bits. Transfer the beef to a dish.  
  
Add the onions, parsnips, garlic, and anchovies to the pot and cook over medium heat until softened, 7 to 8 minutes, scraping the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon to loosen the brown bits. Add the wine and tomato sauce, and bring to a boil. Return the beef to the pot and bring to a boil. Then lower the heat to a simmer, cover, and cook for 1 ½ hours, or until fork-tender. The meat should be almost covered with liquid the whole time; add ½ cup water if the level goes below the top of the meat by an inch.   
  
Remove the lid, raise the heat to medium-high, and cook until the texture is that of a rich pasta ragu, about 10 minutes, gently mashing the pieces of beef with a fork until they break into smaller pieces. (This ragu can easily be made a day in advance—in fact it is better if it rests overnight in the fridge—and it also freezes really well.)  
  
Bring 8 quarts of water to a boil in a large pasta pot.  
  
While the water is heating, heat the beef ragu in a large sauté pan or a heavy-bottomed pot until boiling, and then set it aside.   
  
When the water comes to a boil, add 2 tablespoons salt. Drop the rigatoni into the boiling water and cook for 1 minute less than the package instructions indicate. Just before the pasta is done, carefully ladle ½ cup of the cooking water into the pan containing the ragu.  
  
Drain the cooked rigatoni in a colander and add it to the ragu. Toss over medium hear for about 30 seconds, until nicely coated, and then pour it into a warmed bowl. Serve immediately, with the grated pecorino on the side.   
  
Serves 8 to 10 as a first course, 6 as a main

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