Spoon-Tender Beef with Carrot and Bread

2 generous supper portions, each half the finished stew with 1¾ oz/50 g bread; the bread is included · Active 25 min · Cooking 180 min · Total 205 min

Ingredients

• 14 oz boneless beef chuck, trimmed of hard gristle and cut into 1 in/2.5 cm cubes (400 g prepared raw meat)

• 1 small onion, finely diced (100 g)

• 1 large carrot, scrubbed or peeled and cut into ½ in/1 cm pieces (150 g prepared)

• 1 garlic clove, finely chopped (3 g)

• 2 teaspoons olive oil (10 ml), divided into two 1-teaspoon/5 ml portions

• 1 level tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon all-purpose/plain flour (10 g; weight controls)

• 2 cups plus 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon drinking water (500 ml), plus small measured splashes only if needed during the long simmer

• 1 small dried bay leaf

• ½ teaspoon dried thyme leaves (about 0.5 g)

• ¼ teaspoon fine salt (1.5 g)

• ¼ teaspoon black pepper (about 0.5 g)

• 3½ oz plain crusty bread (100 g), divided into two 1¾ oz/50 g portions

Set out

Stovetop, Heavy 2-liter/about 2-quart saucepan or small Dutch oven with a close-fitting lid and a usable base about 8 in/20 cm wide, Knife and separate boards for produce and raw beef, Kitchen scale, measuring jug and spoons, Tongs, wooden spoon and fork, Food thermometer, A separate holding plate for partly cooked beef between browning batches, Two deep plates or bowls, Shallow storage containers and refrigerator

Make it

1. Prepare and weigh the onion, carrot and garlic first. Cut the raw beef on a separate board, pat dry with disposable paper and wash hands and raw-meat utensils. Keep the bread and its board away from raw juices. Divide the meat into two 200 g batches.

2. Heat the first 5 ml oil over medium-high heat in the heavy saucepan. Brown the first batch of beef for about 5 minutes, turning, and lift to a plate reserved for the partly cooked meat. Brown the second batch in the remaining 5 ml oil for another 5 minutes. Do not force all 400 g into a crowded layer.

3. Lower to medium. Add onion and carrot to the same pot and cook 6–7 minutes, scraping and stirring. If the base threatens to burn, loosen it with 1 tablespoon from the measured water rather than extra oil. Add garlic and thyme, stir 30 seconds, then stir in the flour for 1 minute.

4. Return all meat and collected juices. Gradually add the rest of the measured 500 ml water, scraping the base, then add bay, salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer, taking about 5 minutes. The liquid should come around the meat without filling this 2-liter pot beyond about two-thirds. Cover, lower the heat and keep at a very gentle simmer for about 2 hours 20 minutes to 2 hours 30 minutes. Stir along the bottom every 30 minutes and add 1–2 tablespoons/15–30 ml water only if the pot is drying.

5. Check several pieces with a fork: the connective tissue should be soft enough for the cubes to part under light pressure. The meat must also be hot throughout at least 165°F/74°C. Tough chuck needs further gentle simmering, not harder boiling; extend the time if required. Remove the bay leaf. If the sauce is watery, simmer uncovered about 5 minutes, watching closely. Divide all stew equally between two bowls and serve each with its measured 50 g bread.

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Allergens

Wheat/gluten. Base flour and bread contain wheat/gluten. Bread can also contain milk, egg, soy or sesame depending on its recipe; check its label, all seasonings and shared-equipment warnings. The starch variation changes the flour only and does not make ordinary bread suitable for avoiding wheat.

A useful detail

The 3-hour-25-minute total allows 25 minutes for preparation and approximately 3 hours for two browning batches, vegetables, heating, the long covered simmer and a short uncovered finish. Chuck varies; allow longer if it has not become fork-tender. The starting food and liquid occupy comfortably less than a 2-liter pot, with room to stir. No potato, wine, broth cube or garnish is required.

Keep it well

Refrigerate planned leftovers in shallow containers at 40°F/4°C or below within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C. Keep bread separately. Use stew within 3 days, or freeze promptly chilled portions at 0°F/−18°C for up to 2 months for quality. Thaw in the refrigerator. Reheat only the required stew portion to 165°F/74°C throughout, stirring and adding a spoonful of water if needed.

Modern recipe and historical connection

Beef and bread connect to Cléry's named afternoon dinner on 20 January. The cut, vegetables, seasoning, bread portions and whole cooking method are original modern choices, not a historical reconstruction or claim about the later supper.

Another way

Replace the carrot with the same prepared weight of turnip cut into ½ in/1 cm pieces. Keep the beef, water and long tenderizing stage unchanged; the finished stew will taste sharper.

For a version without wheat flour, use 8 g cornstarch/cornflour instead. Omit flour from step 3. Near the end, mix the starch with 1 tablespoon/15 ml cold water, stir into the simmering stew and cook at least 2 minutes until thickened. Choose bread appropriate to the intended diet and check every label; this is not an allergen-free guarantee.