

Budget Beef Stroganoff

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| 2-pound flank steak | 1 cup sour cream |
| 1 pound mushrooms | 4 tablespoons butter |
| ¼ cup minced shallots | 4 tablespoons olive oil |
| 2 cups beef stock | 4 teaspoons paprika |
| ½ cup Madeira or sherry | 4 teaspoons lemon juice |
| ½ cup cognac or brandy | Salt and pepper to taste |

Trim the fat from the flank steak, then cut across the grain into ¾-inch-thick slices. Dry the slices on paper towels. Lightly oil a baking sheet, and place the steak slices on it. Freeze for about 30 minutes.

In the meantime, slice the mushrooms and mince the shallots. Heat 2 tablespoons of butter and 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large pan until very hot. When the foam subsides, sauté the mushrooms, stirring frequently. Sauté in batches rather than overcrowding the pan. When they are nearly browned and the water has evaporated, lower the heat and stir in the shallots, cooking for just a minute or so. Scrape the mushrooms into a bowl. Season with salt and pepper.

Remove the steak slices from the freezer. In the same pan, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and 2 tablespoons olive oil. When very hot, add the steak slices. Brown quickly on one side, and flip and brown the other side. Don't overcrowd the pan. You may have to do this in batches. Remove the pan from the heat, and sprinkle the browned slices with the paprika, turning them to coat thoroughly. Lightly salt, and remove the slices to a large plate.

Return the pan to the stove over high heat. Add the Madeira or sherry, the cognac, the lemon juice, and the beef stock. Boil the liquids, scraping up any brown steak bits from the bottom of the pan. Continue boiling until the liquids are reduced to an almost syrupy consistency. Turn off the heat and whisk in the sour cream until well blended.

Turn the heat back on to very low. If the heat is too high, the sour cream will curdle. Stir in the steak slices and the mushrooms, just to coat thoroughly and rewarm. Taste for salt and pepper.

Serve at once over buttered noodles or rice.