

Beef Stew

3 pounds lean chuck
Vegetable oil for frying
2 large onions
1 garlic clove
1 bay leaf
1 tablespoon fresh thyme
2 teaspoons fresh rosemary
2 tablespoons parsley
2 tablespoons celery leaves

1 quart beef stock
2 tablespoons tomato paste
5 large carrots
5 celery stalks
1½ pounds small potatoes
¼ cup Madeira or red wine
2 tablespoons arrowroot or cornstarch
Salt and pepper to taste

Cut the chuck in 1½-2-inch cubes and dry them on paper towels. In a large Dutch oven, brown the beef cubes on all sides, and remove them to a bowl. You'll probably need to do this in several batches. Season the meat with salt and pepper. Discard the browning fat.

Coarsely chop the onion. Add a 1-2 tablespoons fresh oil to the Dutch oven, and gently brown the onions. When softened and lightly browned, add the minced garlic clove and cook for 1-2 minutes.

Return the beef to the Dutch oven. Add the quart of beef stock plus the bay leaf, thyme, rosemary, chopped parsley and celery leaves, and the tomato paste. Stir to combine, then cover and simmer for about 1½ hours.

Cut the carrots and celery into 2-inch pieces. Peel the potatoes. If they are quite small, you can leave them whole. Otherwise cut them into 2-inch pieces. Add the vegetables and potatoes to the stew, and simmer them for 30-40 minutes until they are tender.

Remove the stew from the heat, and let it cool. With paper towels, skim the fat from the top of the stew. Return the meat to the simmer.

Dissolve the arrowroot or cornstarch in the Madeira or wine, and add it to the simmering stew. Cook until the stew liquid has thickened a bit. Correct the seasoning.

Serve in bowls with crusty bread.