

Pot Roast with Porcini and Root Vegetables

In some parts of Italy, this dish is called *brasato*, referring to the braising method, and in others, *stracotto*, meaning “overcooked.” When cooked in a moist environment at a barely perceptible simmer, the roast will not taste overcooked but meltingly tender and savory. The porcini speak softly or more forcefully, depending on the quantity you use.

Makes 6 servings | Prep: 20 minutes | Cook: about 3 hours



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INGREDIENTS

- 3 pounds well-marbled beef chuck roast, tied with string (see Note)
- Sea salt or kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup Chianti or other red wine
- 1 cup chopped canned plum tomatoes with some of the purée
- 2 sprigs rosemary or sage
- 1/2 to 1 ounce dried porcini mushrooms
- 4 medium Yukon Gold or other boiling potatoes, or turnips, or a mix of the two, peeled and cut into chunks
- 4 medium carrots, cut into chunks

NOTES

Choose what my butcher calls a “first-cut” chuck roast with visible marbling and connective tissue. Top-blade pot roast and chuck-eye roast are other cuts that will yield good results when cooked this way.

If you are making the pot roast a day in advance, don’t bother to skim the surface fat when the roast is tender. Instead, cool and refrigerate the meat. When ready to proceed, remove and discard the solidified fat. Reheat in a 300°F oven before adding the porcini and vegetables and completing the cooking.

If the sauce doesn’t seem thick enough at the end of cooking, boil it down for 1 to 2 minutes after removing the beef. Too thick? Dilute with a little hot water.

PREPARATION

1. Preheat the oven to 300°F. Sprinkle the beef all over with plenty of salt and a more frugal amount of pepper. Over medium-high heat, heat an ovenproof Dutch oven or broad saucepan large enough to hold the beef with room for vegetables around the edges. Add just enough olive oil to film the bottom of the pan, tilting it to reach the corners. Sear the beef, turning it with tongs, until well browned on all sides and ends. Transfer to a plate.
2. The roast will have given off a little of its own fat, but if it doesn’t seem adequate, add a little more olive oil to the skillet before cooking the onion, stirring, until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Add the garlic, cooking just until fragrant. Sprinkle the flour over the top and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the wine, tomatoes, rosemary, and enough water to come one-third of the way up the sides of the roast. Bring the liquid to a boil.
3. Remove from heat and return the beef to the pan; spoon some of the liquid over it; cover. Place the pan on a rack in the lower third of the oven and cook until the beef is fairly tender but a fork plunged into it meets some resistance, about 2 hours. Check periodically to make sure the braising liquid remains at a bare simmer, and baste the roast with the braising liquid; about halfway through the cooking, turn the roast.
4. While the beef is in the oven, place the porcini in a small bowl and cover with warm water. Let stand for about 15 minutes. Remove the porcini pieces from the bowl, rinse off any grit, and roughly chop. Line a small strainer with a double thickness of paper towel or cheesecloth, and strain the porcini liquid into another small bowl.
5. Using a serving spoon or small ladle, skim off some of the fat floating on the surface of the beef braising liquid. Add the porcini pieces and filtered liquid. Surround the beef with the potatoes and carrots, spooning the liquid over them; they need not be fully immersed. Cook in the oven about 1 hour longer, partially covered, basting often, until the beef and vegetables are fork-tender and the sauce is dense (see Note). Remove the rosemary sprigs. Transfer the beef to a cutting board. Slice across the grain in thick slabs and arrange with the vegetables on a platter or in broad shallow bowls. Spoon the sauce over and around the meat and vegetables.

PIATTO UNICO:

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