



Comfort Foods recipes

Comfort foods for winter

Well happy New Year every one, may your dreams and aspirations for the year come true. Winter is my favourite time of year. With Jack Frost nipping at the door, I like to prepare 'comfort foods' for my friends and family. The comfort food I am going to concentrate on is stews. To stew is to simmer in an enclosed vessel. Most countries include a well-known stew for example The Irish Stew. The stew can be prepared in a variety of dishes, a convenient one is the crock-pot. They can also be simmered on the stove top in a saucepan or in the oven in a Romertoff, this is a clay baker.

Moroccan Tagine

The word Tagine in Morocco means stew, these are often baked in an earthen ware pot like a clay baker and may contain both sweet and savoury. This recipe contains dried fruits and beef. Lamb, venison or pork may be substituted for the meat.

2lb Beef stew meat (chuck is best)

-cut into 1" cubes

1/3c Flour

-toss meat in the flour

1/4c Olive oil

-over medium heat in a heavy pan, brown the meat in batches, remove from pan and set aside.

2 Onions-chopped

3cloves Garlic-chopped

-sauté in oil.

3 Carrots-1" dice

2 1/2lb Rutabaga-1" dice

19oz Canned tomatoes, undrained and chopped

2T Redwine vinegar

2 Bay leaves

2t Fresh ginger-minced

1t each Cinnamon, coriander and cumin

1/2t each Fennel seed, salt and pepper

2 1/2c Beef broth

2T Honey

-stir in all these ingredients, bring to a boil, scraping up all the brown bits on the bottom of the pan. Place the mix in a heavy oven proof pan with the meat, cover and bake at 375* for 2hrs. I use my Romertoff and it worked beautifully.

1/2c each Dried apricots, pitted prunes and halved dried figs.

1T Lemon zest or preserved lemons(these are lemons that have been preserved in salt, I will touch on these in a following issue)

1/2c Slivered Almonds-toasted

-add and bake uncovered for 45minutes.

-remove bay leaves.

1/4c Parsley-chopped

-sprinkle over the top and serve with some crusty bread and a Couscous salad.

Stefado of beef and garlic

This is wonderful, peasant beef stew. The garnish of feta cheese and walnuts gives it an intriguing flavour. Like most stews this one can be made days in advance and the flavour improves with reheating.

3lbs Stewing beef (chuck is best)

6oz can Tomato paste

1/2c Parsley-chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

1 Bay leaf

1t Oregano

1t Cinnamon

1t Cumin

1/2t Sugar

1/2c White wine-dry

1/4c Red-wine vinegar

1lb Pearl onion-parboiled and peeled(I've used pickled onions before and reduced the vinegar, it made an excellent substitution)

30 cloves Garlic-parboil the cloves for 3mins and slip the skins off. Add to stew whole-don't be scared, this process mellows the stinky rose.

-combine all the ingredients in a heavy pot with a lid, cover tightly. Bake 1 1/2 hours at 350* 'til the meat is very tender

-skim off the fat. The sauce should be rather thin, ladle stew in to a deep platter.

1/2lb Feta

1c Walnuts

1/2c Parsley

-sprinkle over the top as a garnish.

Beef Carbonnade

1/4lb Bacon-diced and sautéed 'til crisp, remove and reserve.

4 Large onions-thinly sliced

-add to bacon fat, cover and cook over low heat 'til tender, about 15mins.

1T Brown sugar

-sprinkle over onions, raise heat to medium, stirring until they are dark brown.

1/4t Thyme

1 Bay leaf

Salt and Pepper to taste

-add the seasonings.

12oz(1 1/2c) Dark beer.

2T Red-wine vinegar

-add and bring to a boil, stirring up the bottom of the pot.

3lbs Stewing beef(this can be browned or not)

-add the beef with the bacon, bring back to a boil.

-cover and place in a hot oven of 325* for 1 1/2 hours.

-may have to regulate the oven temperature to maintain a moderate simmer.

If the sauce is too thin remove the beef with a slotted spoon and bring the sauce to a rapid boil until thick. Return the beef and serve at once.

This recipe is also very good with 30 cloves of parboiled garlic added to it with the seasonings. This method is mentioned in the previous recipe.

Now what would be a stew with out a dumpling.

1c Cake flour
2t Baking powder
1/2t Salt
-sift
1 Egg

-break into a measuring cup and fill to half full with

Milk

-beat well and stir in to dry ingredients. Add more milk if necessary but keep batter as dry as possible.

2/3c Stock

-bring to a slow simmer, drop the batter on the surface in tablespoonfuls. Leave ample space around the dumplings for expansion. Then cover the pan with a tight fitting glass pie plate, this will enable you to see the dumplings cook. Try not to lift the lid until they are fully cooked, they will look fluffy and when inserting a wooden pick it will come out clean. The trick to tender dumplings is to keep the stock or stew at a slow simmer this will stop them from becoming tough.

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