

Beef Cheek & Porcini Ragu with Pappardelle

I invested in a pressure cooker (or multi cooker) about 12 months ago and I love it. I gave my old slow cooker away as I found that I preferred the speed of a pressure cooker and the fact that I can brown, cook and simmer in the one pot. I can still use it like a slow cooker but I often find with slow cooking and not the oven, it can turn your food to mush. They definitely make your life easier but I think cooking lamb shanks in 40 minutes, without compromising on flavour is pretty darn good.

So, moving on.....I had a couple of packets of beef cheeks in the freezer but having had a super hot Summer I hadn't really had the opportunity to cook them. Bring on Autumn and cooler weather and those babies were out of the freezer in a flash. What better pairing for rich, tender beef cheeks than fresh, woody winter herbs, red wine, tomatoes and a big pile of dried porcini mushrooms? Let us not forget the slippery strands of fresh pappardelle pasta, coated in the glorious sauce and a generous smattering of sharp, freshly grated Parmigiano RBeefeggiano. Foodgasm.

To adapt this recipe to a slow cooker, please brown the cheeks first and then cook on high for 8 hours. I really feel this type of sauce benefits from simmering and reducing as it makes the sauce a whole lot richer, so if needed, transfer to a pan and finish it off on the stove.

Prep time: 20 Minutes Cooking time: 90 Minutes \$\$ Medium Budget

Serves 6-8

500gm of pappardelle pasta

Olive oil for frying

2 x 400gm packets of beef cheeks

1 tbs of plain flour

12 thyme sprigs

3 rosemary sprigs

2 fresh bay leaves
6 cloves of garlic, sliced
1 brown onion, finely diced
1 cup of dry red wine
40gm of dried porcini mushrooms, soaked in boiling water
400gm tin of cherry tomatoes
400ml of tomato passata
2 tbs of tomato paste
2 tsp of sugar
Sea salt and Cracked pepper
1/2 cup of chopped fresh parsley
Freshly grated parmesan to serve

Pat the beef cheeks dry with paper towel. Season the flour with salt and pepper and lightly coat the beef cheeks, giving them a good shake to get rid of any excess flour.

Place your multi cooker on Browning mode or use a heavy based pan and add a little olive oil. Brown the beef cheeks on both sides until golden and then remove from the cooker and set aside. Still in Browning mode, add the onion, thyme, rosemary and bay leaves, frying until the onion starts to soften. Add the garlic and fry until aromatic before adding the beef cheeks back to the pan.

Drain the porcini, reserving one cup of the liquid. Add the porcini and red wine to the pressure cooker and stir to combine before adding the porcini liquid, cherry tomatoes, passata, tomato paste and sugar. Season with salt and pepper and stir to combine before placing the lid on, locking it in and cooking for 50 minutes on high pressure. This is where you would transfer it to the slow cooker.

Once you have released the pressure, remove the lid and allow to simmer for about 20 minutes. Remove the beef cheeks from the cooker, they should be meltingly tender. Use two forks to pull them roughly apart and pop them back in the sauce. Give them a little stir, have a taste and adjust any seasoning.

Stir through the chopped parsley just before serving.

Cook the Pappardelle according to packet instructions. Drain and toss through the sauce, coating the pasta well. I find with this kind of dish, it is best served in a lovely big serving bowl in the centre of the table. Place a big chunk of parmesan with a hand grater and serve with warm crusty bread and a crisp green salad. Don't forget a good bottle of Chianti and the best of company. Bellissimo!