

THE FEARLESS OLIVE

BY REEMA ISLAM



Greek bovine delicacies

The Venetians are credited for bringing in the *stifado* when they came to rule Greece around the 13th century CE and the dish is full of... onions. Tiny ones, but just load it up with them!

Ingredients

1 kg lean beef, cubed
1 kg small yellow onions, or cut red onions into quarters (as we want the sweetness of the onion)
1 large onion
4 tomatoes
Garlic cloves (to taste; I used 4 cloves)
3 cups vegetable stock (boil diced carrots, celery, onions or leeks, some garlic and thyme. First fry these until the onion is glazed or transparent, then add water and leave on a slow boil)
2 tbsp of red wine vinegar
2 tbsp of tomato puree/paste
1 cinnamon stick
Rosemary and 1 tsp of ground nutmeg
4 bay leaves
Black pepper and salt
Olive oil

Method

In a dry frying pan, heat or sear the meat, then add the olive oil, onions, and garlic and leave until onions start to go soft. Add red wine vinegar, cover and leave for 5 minutes, then add cinnamon, vegetable stock, cloves, nutmeg, bay leaves, rosemary, tomato puree, and salt and pepper to taste. Keep stirring to let all your ingredients mix together. Finally add your chopped tomatoes and continue stirring for 5 minutes. Now transfer to a casserole dish and add enough water to cover the meat and cook in an oven (pre-heated at 180 deg C



for 10 mins and bring it down to 130 C) cook for at least one hour, and check to ensure it is not burning, and add water if needed, to reach a thick sauce.

At some point, place the quartered onions or yellow onions in hot water to soften the skin and peel them; fry these in a little olive oil, to just add a glaze then add these to the casserole and continue cooking for more than 45 minutes or until the meat is cooked through.

Serving

Over a bed of sautéed potatoes or can be eaten with some rice.

BEEF SOFRITO

Known as *sofrito* in Spanish or *refogado* in Portuguese, this is a sauce used as a base in Latin American, Spanish, and Italian cooking. However, in Greece it is especially consumed in the Ionian island of Corfu. For a traditional

sofrito recipe you need to choose thin slices of good quality stewing beef. Gerald Durrell would have salivated over this famous dish from Corfu which is on every menu and a must try if you ever visit this island.

Ingredients

2 kg boneless beef steak pieces (you can cut the size according to your taste, but about 3-4 pieces per kg is a good measure)
250g all purpose flour
2 tbsp ghee
1 cup olive oil
12-14 cloves of garlic, sliced
1 of a cup white wine vinegar
2½ -3 cups beef broth (warm; boil some beef with salt, sliced onions, pinch of garlic and pinch of celery

1 large red onion, diced
2 cups grated carrot
10-15 peppercorns (whole pepper dry roasted)
½ a cup freshly chopped parsley
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Method

Take the beef and after seasoning it with salt and pepper, dip it into the flour, tap it to remove excess salt and set aside. Heat the oil and ghee and sauté the steaks in batches until the beef is browned. Now in this oil add the garlic and onion and sauté until they are slightly browned. Add the carrots and peppercorns to cook for about 2 minutes until the carrots get some colour and at this point add the vinegar and cook for about 1 minute. Add the beef and once it is bubbling on the sides, add the warm broth and season with salt and pepper.

Turn the heat down to low-medium and simmer until the beef is tender and the sauce thickens. About 5 minutes before removing from the heat, stir in the freshly chopped parsley.

Serving

The sofrito is ideally served over hot rice or mashed potatoes and a fresh green salad.



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