OXTAIL STEW

Serves 4 to 6.
By Dennis W. Viau; modified from several classic recipes.

Oxtail is the tail of a steer here in the USA. It is typically sectioned by cutting between the bones. Although the pieces contain a lot of fat, the meat is quite flavorful. The texture can be tough; it therefore benefits from long slow braising in broth. When cooked properly, the meat is tender enough to fall off the bones.

**Ingredients:**
4½ to 5 pounds (about 2kg) oxtails, sectioned
Salt and pepper to season
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
4 tablespoons vegetable oil, such as corn oil or peanut oil, for frying
2 onions; divided
6 carrots; divided
4 celery stalks; divided
2 to 4 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups beef stock; more if needed
2 tablespoons tomato paste
Pinch of dry thyme or 2 to 3 fresh sprigs
6 sprigs fresh parsley
1 to 2 bay leaves
½ bottle of full-bodied dry red wine
1 russet potato

**Directions:**
Season the oxtails with salt and pepper and then dust with flour. Heat oil in a large skillet and brown the oxtails well on all sides. Transfer to a plate and cover. Set aside. Drain excess oil from the pan, but leave the fond (the brown bits in the bottom).

Dice one onion, 3 carrots, and 2 celery stalks. Mince the garlic. Add the vegetables and garlic to the pan and cook over medium heat about 5 minutes, scraping the bottom of the pan occasionally to deglaze it. Return the oxtails to the pan and add the beef stock, tomato paste, and herbs. Add the wine and stir to break up the tomato paste. Bring the liquid to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and cover the pan. Cook 3 hours. You can add more stock to the pan, as needed, if you prefer a greater quantity of soup.

Transfer the oxtails to a plate and cover. Strain the soup, discarding all the solids. Skim and discard the fat. Return the liquid to the pan.

Chop the remaining onion, carrots, and celery. Peel and chop the potato. Place the vegetables in the pan, return the liquid to a boil, and cook over medium-low heat, covered, about 5 minutes. Return the oxtails to the pan and cover. Cook until the potatoes are tender.

Serve in a large soup tureen or individually in bowls.

Although not traditional in this stew, I made buttermilk dumplings. See my recipe for Chicken and Dumplings for the dumpling recipe.

The Step By Step guide begins on the following page.
Season the oxtails lightly with salt and pepper. This meat will be cooked in a pan, not on a grill; therefore, meat juices will not carry away salt. Use salt lightly because it will all stay in the pan. The final dish can be tasted and adjusted for salt before serving.

Dust the pieces with flour. You can do this by either putting flour in a dish and dredging the meat in the flour or by dusting the pieces with flour.
Heat oil in a large, heavy pot and begin browning the meat, a few pieces at a time, until well browned on all sides. Transfer to a plate, cover, and set aside.

I like fresh vegetables in my stew. I therefore discard the cooking vegetables and add new vegetables in a later step. These vegetables will only be used to flavor the soup. They can be chopped coarsely without concern for appearances. Chop the celery and onion the same way.
Without removing the brown bits, the *fond*, from the bottom of the pan after browning the meat, add the vegetables and cook over medium heat a few minutes to sweat the vegetables and deglaze the bottom of the pan.

Return the meat to the pan and add the tomato paste and stock.
Add about half a bottle of wine. Bring the liquid to a boil, cover the pan, and reduce the heat to low. Simmer 3 hours. Check each hour for liquid and add more stock if the liquid appears to be boiling away.

After 3 hours the meat will be so tender it will fall away from the bones. I added more stock because I prefer a lot of soup in my stew.
Transfer the meat pieces to a large bowl and set aside. Use a wire strainer to remove and discard the cooked vegetables.

You can either skim the excess fat off the top of the liquid or, as I am doing here, use a bulb baster to draw up the stock from below the fat and transfer it to a cup or bowl. Discard the fat.
This is where I chop my fresh vegetables for appearance. I like larger chunks in stews. Chop the carrots, celery, and onion into large pieces.

Although not called for in most oxtail stew recipes, my mother always put chopped potatoes in her beef stew. I like it and therefore I am adding a russet potato.
Conclusion

If you enjoy beef with a bold flavor and you don’t mind a lot of fat in the meat, you’ll really appreciate this oxtail stew. It makes a hearty meal that would be perfect on a cold, winter day. Although not traditional, I made buttermilk dumplings for my stew. See my Chicken and Dumplings for the dumpling recipe.