

CHEESES LAVE

Menus by Mail

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MENU 1

FRENCH ONE-POT MEAL

CASSOULET

Difficulty: EASY

Serves: 4

Nothing makes me feel as cozy in the wintertime as cassoulet. I guess you could call it a fancy French version of pork and beans. It tastes a lot better than our American pork and beans, though.

Cassoulet is traditionally made with pork sausage, pork, goose, duck, sometimes lamb, pork skin, and white beans, as well as duck or goose fat. They typically use duck confit or goose confit. Duck confit is a French dish made with the leg of the duck (although confit is also made with geese and pork). The duck legs are cured in salt, and then poached in its own fat. This was a traditional way to preserve meats.

Duck confit is optional in this recipe. You could also use leftover roast pork, roast ham, or roast duck or chicken.

THINGS TO DO AHEAD

1. Soak the beans 12-24 hours ahead

CASSOULET

INGREDIENTS

Great Northern beans (1 lb)
 Whey, buttermilk, yogurt, kefir, apple cider vinegar, or lemon juice (2 TBS)
 Goose or duck fat, lard from pastured pigs, grass-fed butter, or expeller-pressed coconut oil (10 TBS)
 Garlic cloves (16)
 Onions, yellow or white (2)
 Carrots (2)
 Ham hocks, large, from pastured pigs (2)
 Pork shoulder, pastured (1 lb)
 Pancetta or bacon, pastured, nitrate-free (1 1/2 lbs)
 Oregano sprigs (4)
 Thyme sprigs (4)
 Bay leaves (3)
 Tomatoes, canned or in a jar, whole, peeled (1 cup)
 White wine (1 cup)
 Whey, buttermilk, yogurt, kefir, apple cider vinegar, or lemon juice (2 TBS)
 Chicken stock, preferably homemade (2 cups)
 Pork sausages, in casing, pastured (1 lb)
 Breadcrumbs, sourdough, sprouted, or gluten-free (2 cups)
Optional: Duck confit legs, or roast duck, chicken, pork or ham (use the equivalent of 4 duck confit legs)

EQUIPMENT

6-quart pot
 5-quart Dutch oven
 Kitchen twine

DIRECTIONS

1. Place the beans in a large glass or ceramic bowl. Add the whey and cover the beans with warm filtered water. Cover and allow the beans to soak overnight, and up to 24 hours. The next day, rinse the beans and set aside.

2. Heat 2 tablespoons of the duck fat or other fat in a 6-quart pot over medium-high heat.

3. Peel the garlic cloves and finely mince, and push through a garlic press. Peel the onions and carrots and chop. Add half of the minced garlic, onions and carrots to the pot and cook until lightly browned, about 10 minutes. Add ham hocks along with soaked beans and about 6 cups of fresh, filtered water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer beans until tender, about 1 1/2 hours.

4. Transfer ham hocks to a plate; let cool. Pull off meat and discard skin, bone and gristle. Chop meat and add to beans. Set aside.

5. Heat 2 tablespoons of the duck fat in a 5- quart Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Cut the pork shoulder and pancetta or bacon into 1-inch cubes. Add the pork cubes and brown for 8 minutes. Add the pancetta and cook for 5 minutes. Add the remaining garlic, ions, and carrots. Cook until lightly browned, about 10 minutes.

6. Tie together oregano, thyme and bay leaves with kitchen twine. Add to the pan along with the tomatoes. Cook until the liquid thickens, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add wine and reduce by half. Add the chicken stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cook, uncovered, until liquid had thickened, about 1 hour. Discard herbs, and set Dutch oven aside.

7. Meanwhile, sear duck legs in 2 tablespoons of duck fat in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat for 8 minutes, if using. Transfer duck to a plate. Next, brown sausages in the fat, about 8 minutes. Cut sausages into 1/2- inch slices. Pull duck meat off of bones. Discard fat and bones, or save for another use, like stock. Stir duck and sausages into pork stew.

8. Heat oven to 300 degrees. Mix beans and pork stew in 4-quart earthenware or glass casserole. Cover with breadcrumbs and drizzle with remaining duck fat. Bake, uncovered for 3 hours. Raise oven temperature to 500 degrees, and cook cassoulet until crust is golden, about 5 minutes.

MENU 2

SPANISH COMFORT FOOD DUTCH OVEN PAELLA

Paella is a one-pot dish made from rice and either seafood and/or meat from Valencia, on the east coast of Spain. It is traditionally flavored with saffron. I adapted this recipe from Cook's Illustrated. For this recipe, you don't need the giant paella pan --you can make paella in a Dutch oven (the Dutch oven should be 11 to 12 inches in diameter with at least a 6-quart capacity).

THINGS TO DO AHEAD

Optional: Soak the rice 8 hours ahead (or overnight) If you are using sprouted rice, it does not need to be soaked

DUTCH OVEN PAELLA

Difficulty: EASY

Serves: 6

INGREDIENTS

Whey, buttermilk, yogurt, kefir, apple cider vinegar, or lemon juice (2 TBS)
 Filtered water (1 1/2 cups)
 Brown rice, short grain, or sprouted brown rice (2 cups)
 Shrimp, wild, extra-large (1 lb)
 Olive oil, from a reliable source, or pastured lard or expeller-pressed coconut oil (4 oz)
 Sea salt
 Freshly ground black pepper
 Garlic cloves (8-9)
 Chicken thighs, boneless, skinless, pastured or free-range organic (1 lb)
 Red bell pepper (1)
 Italian sausage, from pastured pigs (8 oz)
 Onion, yellow or white, medium (1)
 Diced tomatoes (1 - 14 1/2 oz can)
 Chicken stock, preferably homemade (3 cups)
 White wine, dry (1/3 cup)
 Saffron threads (1/2 tsp)
 Bay leaf (1)
 Mussels, fresh (12)
 Green peas, frozen (1/2 cup)
 Lemon, organic (1)
 Parsley leaves, fresh (2 teaspoons)

EQUIPMENT

Large stock pot or Dutch oven

DIRECTIONS

1. Warm 1 cup of the filtered water in a small saucepan to about body temperature (warm to touch, but not hot).
2. Add the brown rice and the warm water, plus 1 tablespoon of whey, yogurt, kefir or buttermilk to a glass or enamelware bowl or mason jar.
3. Cover and let soak for 7-10 hours (or overnight) in a warm place. Note: If you are using sprouted brown rice, it does not need to be soaked.
4. Peel and devein the shrimp. (Devein means pull out the black thing on the back of the shrimp -- do not skip this step). Remove the peas from the freezer and allow to defrost.

5. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position; heat oven to 350 degrees.
6. Peel garlic cloves and finely mince.
7. Toss shrimp, 1/4 teaspoon sea salt, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper, 1 tablespoon olive oil or other fat, and one teaspoon of minced garlic together in a medium bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until needed.
8. Season the chicken thighs with sea salt and black pepper. Set aside.
9. Heat 1 tablespoon of fat in large stock pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat.
10. Remove seeds from the bell pepper and slice into strips. Add peppers and cook, stirring occasionally, until skin begins to blister and turn spotty black, about 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer peppers to a small plate and set aside.
11. Add 1-2 tablespoons of fat to the now empty pot. Add chicken pieces in a single layer. Cook, without moving pieces, until browned, about 3 minutes. Turn pieces and brown on other side, about 3 minutes longer. Transfer chicken to a medium bowl.
10. Reduce heat to medium.
11. Slice the sausage into 1/2 inch pieces, on the bias.
12. Add the sausage to the pot, stirring frequently, until deeply browned, about 4 to 5 minutes.
13. Transfer sausage to the bowl with the chicken.
14. Add enough oil to the pot now to equal 2 TBS.
15. Peel and dice the onion. Add the onion to the pot and cook, stirring frequently, until softened, about 3 minutes.
16. Stir in the remaining garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.
17. Drain the can of tomatoes well. Add to the pot and cook until mixture begins to darken and thicken slightly, about 3 minutes.
18. Stir the rice in and cook until grains are well coated with tomato mixture. Stir in the chicken stock, white wine, saffron, bay leaf, and 1/2 teaspoon of sea salt.
19. Return chicken and sausage to the pot and transfer to the oven. Cook until rice absorbs almost all the liquid, about 15 minutes. Remove pot from oven. Uncover, and scatter shrimp over rice.
20. Scrub and debeard the mussels. Rinse in a colander. With your hands, remove the "beard" -- the little hairy bit -- from each mussel. It's near the hinge. Pull hard. (Do NOT do this step ahead. After you do this, the mussels die and go bad, so it's important to do this just before cooking.)
21. Insert mussels, hinged side down into rice (so they stand upright), arrange bell pepper strips in a pinwheel pattern, and scatter peas over top. Cover and return to oven. Cook until shrimp are opaque and mussels have opened, 10 to 12 minutes.
22. Let paella stand, covered, for 5 minutes. Discard any mussels that have not opened and bay leaf.
23. Roughly chop the parsley and sprinkle over the paella.
24. Cut the lemon into wedges, and serve, with the paella.

MENU 3

BRITISH PUB DINNER BANGERS & MASH ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Bangers and mash, also known as sausages and mash, is a traditional English dish consisting of mashed potatoes and sausages.

Wikipedia says: "Although it is sometimes stated that the term 'bangers' has its origins in World War II, the term was actually in use at least as far back as 1919. The term 'bangers' is attributed to the fact that sausages, particularly the kind made during World War II under rationing, can explode under high heat if not cooked carefully. Modern British sausages do not have this attribute."

BANGERS & MASH

Difficulty: Easy

Serves: 6

INGREDIENTS

Butter, grass-fed, organic (8 TBS)
Onion, yellow or white (2 large)
Potatoes, russet, organic if possible (4 large)
Pork sausages, pastured or free-range organic, additive-free (4 large)
Flour, sprouted or rice flour for gluten-free (1 TBS)
Optional: Red wine, a couple splashes
Chicken or beef stock, preferably homemade (1 1/2 cups)
Sea salt
Black pepper, freshly ground
Milk, whole, grass-fed organic (1 1/2 cups)

EQUIPMENT

Meat thermometer
Colander
Potato ricer or masher

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large stainless steel skillet, add 4 tablespoons of butter. Melt the butter over medium heat.
2. Peel and slice the onions. Add the onions to the skillet and cook for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring often, until golden brown.
3. Peel and coarsely chop the potatoes.
4. Meanwhile, fill two pots with filtered water. Bring one pot to the boil and add the potatoes. Cook for 20 minutes or until tender.
5. Bring the second pot to 149 degrees F, using a meat thermometer to check. Gently drop in the sausages and cook for 20 minutes.
6. Once the onions are nicely browned, sprinkle the flour on top and cook for another minute. Add a couple splashes of the red wine. When that has evaporated, add the chicken or beef stock. Reduce the heat to a simmer, and cook for 10 to 15 minutes. Season with sea salt and pepper to taste.
7. In a small saucepan, gently warm the milk on the stove over medium-low heat, but do not boil.
8. When the sausages are done, drain in a colander.

9. Pass the potatoes through a potato ricer back into the empty pot, or mash with a potato masher. Add the rest of the butter and warmed milk. Stir well and season to taste with sea salt and pepper.

10. Divide the mashed potatoes among 4 plates, top each with a sausage and the onion gravy. Serve immediately.

ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Difficulty: Easy

Serves: 6

If you hate Brussels sprouts, you haven't had these roasted Brussels sprouts. It was this method of preparation that made my 4-year-old fall in love with Brussels sprouts. They are now one of her very favorite vegetables. It's all the saturated fat and caramelization that takes them over the top.

INGREDIENTS

Brussels sprouts (1 1/2 lbs)
Bacon grease, or lard from pastured pigs, duck fat, grass-fed butter or ghee, grass-fed beef tallow or expeller-pressed coconut oil (1/4 cup)
Sea salt (to taste)
Black pepper, freshly ground (to taste)

EQUIPMENT

Baking sheet

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Cut off the ends of the Brussels sprouts and remove any yellow outer leaves. Cut the Brussels sprouts in half.
3. Melt the fat and pour over Brussels sprouts on a baking sheet.
4. Sprinkle with sea salt and black pepper.
5. Roast in the oven for approximately 35 to 40 minutes, or until crisp on the outside and tender on the inside. Toss the sprouts occasionally so they brown evenly.
6. Remove from the oven. Add sea salt and black pepper if necessary.
7. Serve immediately.

DESSERT

BRITISH STICKY PUDDING

Difficulty: Easy

Serves: 6

In Great Britain, all desserts are called "pudding". However, Sticky Toffee Pudding is one of the very favorites in the U.K.-- equivalent to our American apple pie. Call me a traitor, but I think I like it even better than apple pie.

To make it healthier, I used only 1/4 to 1/3 of the sugar called for in other recipes. If you want to add more sugar to the toffee sauce, you can; however, I really don't think the pudding needs it. I also used sprouted flour and natural unrefined sweeteners including coconut or palm sugar, sucanat and muscovado.

INGREDIENTS

Pudding:

Dates (6 ounces)

Filtered water (8 ounces)

Baking soda (1 teaspoon)

Sprouted flour, or rice flour (1 1/4 cups)

Baking powder, aluminum-free (1 teaspoon)

Sea salt (1/2 teaspoon)

Butter, unsalted, grass-fed, softened (4 tablespoons, plus a little extra to butter the pan)

Muscovado, sucanat, or coconut sugar (1/4 cup)

Eggs, large, pastured or free-range organic, at room temperature (2)

Vanilla extract, organic if possible (1 teaspoon)

Toffee sauce:

Cream, from grass-fed cows (2 cups)

Muscovado sugar, sucanat, or coconut sugar (1/8-1/4 cup) depending on how sweet you want it

Sea salt (1 pinch)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350.

2. Butter an 8- to 9-inch pie plate or other baking pan (square or round is fine).

3. Make the pudding: Pit the dates and snip off the ends.

4. In a medium saucepan, heat the dates and water. Once the water begins to boil, remove from heat and stir in the baking soda. Set aside.

5. In a mixing bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder, and salt.

6. In another bowl, with a standing mixer or by hand, beat the butter and granulated sugar until light and fluffy.

7. Gradually beat in the eggs, then the vanilla.

8. Stir in half of the flour mixture, then the date mixture, then add the remaining flour mixture until just mixed. Don't overbeat the batter.

9. Scrape the batter into the baking dish and bake for 45-50 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

10. Remove the pudding from the oven, and let cool slightly before serving.

11. Make the toffee sauce by bringing the cream, sugar, and salt to a boil in a medium saucepan, stirring often to melt the sugar.

11. Lower heat and simmer, stirring constantly for about 5 minutes, until the mixture is thick and coats the spoon.

12. Cut portions of the cake and plate dousing with warm toffee sauce.

SHOPPING LIST

DAIRY

- Butter, unsalted, grass-fed, organic (8 oz)
- Cream, grass-fed, organic (2 cups)
- Milk, whole, raw if possible, grass-fed, organic (1 1/2 cups)
- Whey, buttermilk, yogurt, kefir, apple cider (6 TBS)

FATS

- Bacon grease, duck fat, ghee, lard, tallow or expeller-pressed coconut oil (4 oz)
- Goose, duck fat, lard, ghee, or expeller-pressed coconut oil (5 oz)
- Olive oil, from a reliable source, or pastured lard or expeller-pressed coconut oil (4 oz)

FLOUR, GRAINS & LEGUMES

- Great Northern beans (1 lb)
- Breadcrumbs from sourdough, sprouted, or gluten-free bread (2 cups)
- Sprouted flour or rice flour for gluten-free (1 1/4 cups + 1 TBS)
- Rice, brown, short grain (2 cups)

SPICES

- Bay leaves (4)
- Black pepper, freshly ground
- Saffron threads (1/2 tsp)
- Sea salt

MEAT, FISH & EGGS

- Chicken thighs, boneless, skinless, pastured or free-range organic (1 lb)
- Chicken stock, preferably homemade (5 cups)
- Chicken or beef stock, preferably homemade (1 1/2 cups)
- Eggs, large, pastured or free-range organic, at room temperature (2)
- Ham hocks, large (2)
- Mussels (12)
- Pancetta or bacon, pastured, nitrate-free (1 1/2 lbs)
- Pork shoulder, pastured (1 lb)
- Pork sausages, pastured or free-range organic, additive-free (4 large + 1 lb)
- Italian sausage, from pastured pigs (8 oz)
- Shrimp, wild, extra-large (1 lb)
- Optional: Duck confit legs, or roast duck, chicken, pork or ham (4 duck confit legs)*

FRESH PRODUCE

- Brussels sprouts (1 1/2 lbs)
- Carrots (2)
- Dates (6 ounces)
- Garlic cloves (25)
- Lemon, organic (1)
- Onions, yellow or white, large (4 large + 1 medium)
- Oregano sprigs, fresh (4)
- Parsley leaves, fresh (2 teaspoons)
- Potatoes, russet, organic if possible (4 large)
- Red bell pepper (1)
- Thyme sprigs (4)

SWEETENERS

- Muscovado, sucanat or coconut sugar (1/2 cup)

OTHER

- Baking powder, aluminum-free (1 teaspoon)
- Baking soda (1 teaspoon)
- Filtered water (2 1/2 cups)
- Green peas, frozen (1/2 cup)
- Red wine, a couple splashes
- Tomatoes, canned, diced (1 - 14 1/2 oz can)
- Tomatoes, canned, whole, peeled (1 cup)
- White wine (1 cup)
- White wine, dry (1/3 cup)
- Vanilla extract (1 teaspoon)
- Vinegar, or lemon juice (2 TBS)

EQUIPMENT

- Butcher/kitchen twine
- Colander
- Dutch oven (5-quart) or heavy bottomed-pot
- Meat thermometer
- Pot, 6-quart
- Potato ricer or masher