

Pot-au-feu and Warm Chocolate Tarts from *Cooking with Renoir*, with Dr. Wendy Nolan Joyce



Pot-au-Feu is French for “pot on the fire”, a traditional beef stew which is left cooking over the fire. In previous times, it may simply have been a cooking pot which was left over the fire, into which was thrown whatever food and scraps happened to be available. Pot au Feu usually combines several cuts of meat and marrowbones into a broth with vegetables, and can constitute a three-course meal all on its own. The broth is served as a soup, the meat with mustard, the marrow with bread.

Today in France, you can buy “pot au feu” meat. Expect this to be meat which reflects the historical background of this dish: relatively inexpensive and inferior cuts, which will soften with long slow cooking. While such meat is quite adequate for a Pot-au-Feu, feel free to use better cuts if you wish. As a Pot au Feu is historically a stew-like dish of whatever meat and vegetables were available, there are no absolute guidelines about what it should contain. However, in general it will contain beef, some bones (such as ox-tail), vegetables (such as potatoes, carrots, onions, leeks, turnips) and herbs. It’s a perfect dish for cool winter evenings, and can be made in a slow cooker. For simplicity, today we are using beef ribs (see note).

Cooking cartilaginous meat in the stew will result in gelatin being dissolved into the broth. If the stew is allowed to cool, the broth may turn into a jelly, resulting in an interesting texture. Allowing the stew to cool also allows the removal of excess fat, which floats on the surface and solidifies. In order to give the broth a slightly smoked taste and its typical brown color, onions are cut in half then charred in a frying pan until the onion's surface is completely black. The cloves are driven into the onions so that both onions and cloves can be removed easily before serving.

Ingredients Servings 4-6

- 1.7 kg beef, with bone (beef ribs)
- 300 g lardons or 300 bacon, cut into cubes
- 4 -6 small onions, peeled
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 medium sized carrots, peeled and halved
- 2 leeks, washed and cut into chunks
- 2 ribs celery
- 4 large potatoes, peeled & halved
- bouquet garni or 1 bay leaf
- 2 sprigs fresh parsley
- 1 sprig fresh thyme and rosemary
- 4 cups beef stock
- 5 black peppercorns
- 1 tbsp sea salt
- finely chopped parsley, to serve

Preparation 30min

Cooking 3-10 hours

Skill level Easy

Accompaniments : cornichons, sea salt, dijon mustard

Method:

1. First prepare the vegetables. Make sure they are clean. Peel the onions, and stud with the one clove. For the leek, trim off the dark green tops, and chop into large pieces. Trim the tips off the carrots and the celery. Halve the carrots across, and do the same with the celery.

2. Prepare the dry rub for the short ribs by combining the salt, pepper, ½ tablespoon rosemary, and ½ tablespoon thyme. Rub this combination all over the short ribs.
3. In a large stock pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. When the oil begins to ripple, place the meat in a single layer in the oil to sear, 2 minutes per side. Once all sides have been seared, remove them to a plate, and put the vegetables into the bottom of the pot. If you have more meat than will fit at one time in a single layer in your pot, work in batches.
4. Arrange the meat back in the pot on top of the vegetables, and cover with the beef stock and the water. Add the remaining rosemary stalk, 2 thyme sprigs, and bay leaf to the broth. Raise the heat to high, and cover, bringing the broth to a boil. Lower the heat, and simmer, covered, for 3 hours on low, until the meat is tender, and falls off the bone.

Notes: Depending on the meat being used, a Pot au Feu can be very rich. If you would like a leaner version, prepare it the day before and allow to cook overnight. Once cooled the fat will rise to the surface and it can be skimmed off. The dish can then be re-warmed.

Serving

1. Place the meat and bones in a serving bowl
2. Pass all the broth through the strainer, separating the broth from the vegetables and stems and bay leaves. Skim the fat off the surface of the broth once it settles. At this point you can thicken the jus with flour or cornstarch if desired.
3. Ladle the broth all around the meat, and garnish with some leftover parsley and a few cornichons.
4. Slice meat and serve accompanied with pickles and mustard, French bread and butter.

5. Serve the thickened jus in a gravy boat.

Note: Traditionally, the broth is served first with a bit of nutmeg and the marrow (if a marrowbone was used) spread on toasted bread. Then the meat and the vegetables are served with coarse salt and strong Dijon mustard, and sometimes also with gherkins pickled in vinegar. *Pot-au-feu* broth may also be used as a soup (often enriched with rice, pasta or toasted bread), as a base for sauces, or for cooking vegetables or pasta.

A Note on Beef Short Ribs: When you go to your butcher to buy the short ribs, you'll want to buy by the weight, rather than "by the rib." Some ribs are meatier than others, so it may take more to reach the 1.7 kilograms you need. Ideally, you'll find 6 chunky, meaty segments.

Warm Chocolate Tarts. *Cooking with Renoir*



Recipe adapted from François Payard by Chef Dr. Wendy Joyce

Makes 6 to 8 servings

Sweet Tart Dough:

120 g icing sugar

250 g all-purpose flour

Pinch of salt

127 g unsalted butter, softened

1 large egg

Filling:

227 g 70% chocolate, finely chopped

174 g cream

121 g full fat milk

1 large egg, lightly beaten

Make the dough:

1. Sift together the icing sugar, flour and salt into a bowl.
2. Place the butter in a food processor and process until smooth, about 15 seconds. Scatter the flour mixture over the butter, add the egg, and process just until the dough forms a mass; do not overmix. Turn the dough out onto the counter and divide it in two. Shape each half into a disc, wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 1/2 hour.
3. Lightly butter mini tart pans. Or, at home, you may want to make one large 9 1/2-inch tart pan with a removable bottom.
4. Dust a work surface lightly with flour. Dust one of the discs lightly with flour and roll it out to a rough 12-inch circle. Cut rounds a bit larger than the mini tart pans. Roll the dough up onto the rolling pin and gently unroll it over the prepared pan. Press the dough into the pan and roll the pin over the top of the pan to remove the excess dough. Prick the bottom of the tart shell all over with a fork. Chill the tart shell for 15 minutes.

5. Preheat the oven to 160°C. Line the tart shell with baking paper, and fill with dried beans, rice or pie weights. Bake the tart shell for 7-10 minutes depending on size of tart. Remove baking paper and weights and continue baking for 3-9 minutes longer, until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack. Leave the oven on.

Make the filling:

6. Place the chopped chocolate in a medium bowl and set aside.

7. Combine the cream and milk in a medium saucepan (or microwave) and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Pour the hot cream mixture over the chocolate. Allow to stand for 1 minute to melt the chocolate, then whisk until smooth. Cool for 10 minutes.

8. Whisk the egg into the chocolate mixture. Pour the filling into the tart shell. Bake the tart for 12 to 15 minutes, until the edges of the filling are set; the center will still be soft. Cool the tart on a wire rack for 10 minutes and serve warm with ice cream.

Note: you can make the tart ahead and refrigerate it. Reheat it in a 200°F oven for about 10 minutes before serving.