

NEW COOK

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Despite its name, pot roast isn't a roast at all; it is actually a braise (which is needed to make the tough meat delicious). There are a million ways to make it, but I chose the method that is perhaps the most basic and simple.

I tossed a large hunk of beef in a pot — it was a cap bottom round roast, because that was cheapest, but any beef cut with the word “roast” in it will be fine. I added two carrots cut into 2-inch lengths, two ribs of celery cut into 2-inch lengths, one onion cut into wedges, a can of beef broth and a sprig of oregano.

I covered it, stuck it in the oven at 300 degrees for about three hours, and when I took it out it was amazing. Then I cut a couple of slices and put them on homemade toast, and it was amazing.

Searing

Searing is cooking meat in a pan at a high temperature until the surface that is touching the pan turns a deep shade of brown.

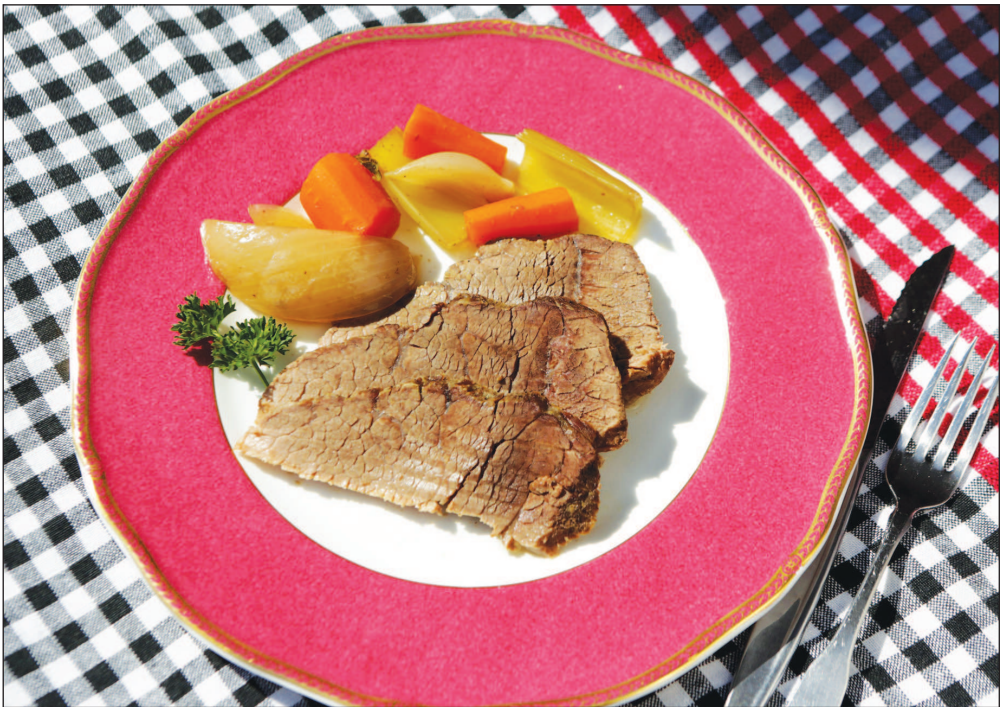
The brown indicates that the sugars inherent in the meat actually caramelize, which gives the meat a warm and rich flavor.

Searing meat, however, does not actually cook it, or at least no more than just the barest surface. If you leave the meat over high heat for longer than it takes to sear, you will only end up burning it.

So the meat, once seared, has to be cooked in another way. One of my favorite dishes to cook is chicken that is first seared and then braised. This is the best of all worlds. The chicken first picks up the depth from the browning and searing, and then it is imbued with flavor from the braising liquid.

EASY SPAGHETTI SAUCE

Yield: 4 servings



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Easy pot roast

- 1 **tablespoon olive oil**
- 2 **tablespoons minced onion, see note**
- 1 **garlic clove, peeled and crushed, see note**
- 1 **(28-ounce) can tomatoes — whole, pureed, crushed or diced, see note**
- Salt and pepper to taste**

Note: To peel an onion or garlic, remove papery outer layer. To mince an onion, cut it into tiny pieces. A clove of garlic is a single bud; the entire clump of garlic is called a head. To crush a garlic clove, place it under the flat side of a knife and hit the other side of the knife sharply with your hand.

— If using whole tomatoes, cut off the tough stem end with a knife and crush each tomato with your hands.

1. Heat the oil in a medium pot over medium-high heat. When hot, add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until onion becomes translucent, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add crushed garlic and cook, stirring until fragrant, about 1 minute.
2. Add tomatoes with their juice. Turn heat down to low or very low; the sauce should

cook, uncovered, at a low simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until sauce is thickened, about 30 to 45 minutes depending on how thick you like it. Remove from heat and add salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm over pasta with plenty of grated Parmesan cheese.

Per serving: 97 calories; 4 g fat; 1 g saturated fat; no cholesterol; 3 g protein; 15 g carbohydrate; 9 g sugar; 4 g fiber; 408 mg sodium; 70 mg calcium

— Adapted from a recipe from “Rao’s Cookbook,” by Frank Pellegrino

EASY PORK ROAST WITH SAUERKRAUT AND APPLES

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

- 1½ **pounds pork roast or loin (not chops, ribs or tenderloin)**
- ¼ **teaspoon salt**
- Pepper to taste**
- 2 **apples**
- 1 **(14.5-ounce) can sauerkraut or 2 cups fresh sauerkraut, rinsed and drained**

1. Preheat oven to 350

degrees.

2. Sprinkle pork with salt and pepper, and place in roast- ing pan.

3. Grate apples (not the core) on the large holes of a grater or chop finely with a knife. If you get tired of grating or chopping, you can cut one of the apples into wedges. Mix the apples and sauerkraut together in a medium bowl and spread around the pork.

4. Cook 1 hour, or until a meat thermometer inserted into the middle of the meat registers 145 degrees.

Per serving (based on 4): 350 calories; 15 g fat; 3 g saturated fat; 109 mg cholesterol; 36 g protein; 17 g carbohydrate; 11 g sugar; 5 g fiber; 906 mg sodium; 51 mg calcium

— Recipe by Mary Anne Pikrone

EASY POT ROAST

Yield: 8 servings

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- 2½ to 3 pounds beef roast
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper, about 25 grinds of a pepper grinder
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch lengths
- 2 ribs celery, cut into 2-inch lengths
- 1 onion, peeled and cut into 6 wedges, see note
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can beef broth
- 2 springs fresh oregano, thyme or rosemary, or ½ teaspoon dried

Note: To peel onion, remove the papery outer layer and the stringy stem.

1. Preheat oven to 300 degrees.
2. Remove any large fat deposits from meat, if applicable. Sprinkle meat all over with salt and pepper. Place in a large, heavy pot with a lid (a Dutch oven works best). Scatter carrots, celery and onion around the meat. Add the broth and herbs. Cover and cook in oven 2½ to 3 hours, until meat is tender. To serve, slice across the grain.

Per serving: 344 calories; 25 g fat; 10 g saturated fat; 101 mg cholesterol; 26 g protein; 4 g carbohydrate; 2 g sugar; 1 g fiber; 449 mg sodium; 33 mg calcium

— Recipe by Daniel Neman

EASY SEARED AND BRAISED CHICKEN

Yield: 2 servings

- 2 **chicken breasts, 2 leg quarters or 4 thighs**
- ½ **teaspoon salt**
- Pepper to taste**
- ½ **tablespoon oil, if needed**
- 1 **cup dry white**

- wine or water
- 2 **sprigs fresh tarragon, rosemary or thyme, or ¼ teaspoon dried**

1. Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper. Place a skillet large enough to hold the chicken in a single layer on medium-high heat. Spray skillet with nonstick spray or lightly coat with oil. When hot, place chicken skin-side down on skillet. Cook until golden brown on bottom, about 3 to 5 minutes. Turn and cook until other side is brown, another 3 to 5 minutes.

2. Add liquid (it should immediately start to boil) and herbs. Cover and reduce heat to a low simmer. Cook until chicken is done, about 40 minutes for breasts and 50 minutes for legs or thighs. Add more liquid if it has boiled away. To test if chicken is cooked, make a small cut at least halfway through — there should be no pinkness visible. Serve with sauce from pan over meat or on the side.

Per serving: 346 calories; 20 g fat; 5 g saturated fat; 111 mg cholesterol; 37 g protein; 1 g carbohydrate; no sugar; no fiber; 692 mg sodium; 31 mg calcium

— Recipe by Daniel Neman

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