

Long, slow braise to make tough meat awesome

BEER BRAISED BEEF SHORT RIBS

If you use bone-in short ribs, check the meat after 3 hours of braising. They likely will need an extra hour of braising.

- Start to finish:** 4 hours (1 hour active)
- Servings:** 8
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
 - 5 pounds boneless beef short ribs
 - Kosher salt and ground black pepper
 - 2 cups thinly sliced yellow onions
 - 2 medium carrots, coarsely chopped
 - 1 1/2 tablespoons minced garlic
 - 2 tablespoons tomato paste
 - 1 sprig fresh thyme (or 1 teaspoon dried thyme)
 - 1 bay leaf
 - Two 12-ounce bottles beer
 - 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
 - 1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
 - 1 1/2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
 - 1/2 cup water
 - 2 teaspoons lemon juice

Heat the oven to 325 F.

In a large Dutch oven over medium-high, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil. Use paper towels to pat the ribs dry, then season them on all sides with salt and pepper. Reduce the heat to medium, add a quarter of the ribs to the pot and brown on all sides, about 10 minutes. Transfer them to a large platter or bowl. Repeat with the remaining oil and short ribs, transferring them to the platter or bowl when finished.

Return the pot to the heat and add the onions and the carrots. Cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, 10 to 15 minutes.

Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Add the tomato paste, thyme and bay leaf, then saute for 2 minutes. Transfer the vegetable mixture to the bowl with the ribs. Return the pot to the heat and add the beer. Bring to a boil and simmer until the beer is reduced by about three-quarters.

When the beer is reduced, add the chicken broth and bring to a boil. Return the meat and vegetables to the pot and cover with a piece of kitchen parchment. Put the lid on the pot and set in the oven on the lower shelf and cook until the meat is very tender, 4 to 5 hours.

Use tongs to transfer the ribs to a platter. Let them stand until cool enough to be handled.

Meanwhile, strain liquid in the pan into a bowl. Discard the solids and return the liquid to the pot. Let stand for several minutes, then skim off any fat that floats to the surface (or use a fat separator).

In a small bowl, whisk together the flour and water. Set the pot over medium-high heat and bring the cooking liquid to a boil. Add half of the flour mixture in a steady stream, whisking. Bring the sauce to a boil, check the consistency and if you would like it thicker, whisk in more of the flour-water mixture. Simmer for 8 minutes. Whisk in the mustard and lemon juice, then season with salt and pepper.

Add the meat to the pot along with any juices from the platter. Cook gently, just until heated through. To serve, arrange some rib meat on each plate and spoon some of the sauce over each portion.

Nutrition information per serving: 620 calories; 290 calories from fat (47 percent of total calories); 32 g fat (13 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 170 mg cholesterol; 15 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 3 g sugar; 57 g protein; 820 mg sodium.

By SARA MOULTON
Associated Press

How do you transform a tough, less expensive cut of meat into something tender and delicious? You braise it!

Braising is a wonderful and basic cooking technique that uses a slow, wet heat in a covered pot. It's great for cuts such as chuck, flank, brisket, rump and round. In fact, cooked properly, these cuts can be more delicious than more tender cuts. I'm using short ribs in this recipe, but the method can be used to wonderful effect on any other tough cut of meat.

Short ribs can be butchered three ways: English, flanken or boneless. In English style, the ribs are cut parallel to the bone, with one bone per cut. In flanken style — which originated with the Jews of Eastern Europe — the ribs are cut across the bone. With English style, you get relatively uniform chunks of beef. With flanken style, you get a sauce with more body and flavor because the cut bones enrich it.

You also can get boneless, which we used in this recipe.



This Feb. 16 photo shows short ribs being braised.



This Feb. 16 photo shows short ribs in Concord, N.H.

They cook a little faster than ribs with bones, and you get more meat for your money (you're not paying for the bone weight).

We start by browning the ribs in a pan. During browning, the meat will give off juices that form tasty little brown bits on the bottom of the pan. Reconstituted

with wine once the meat has finished browning, these bits end up enriching the sauce. I also brown the vegetables, which amps up their natural sweetness.

This recipe requires two bottles of beer, though you also could use a full bottle of red wine. But whether beer or wine, please choose bottles for which you feel some real affection. It doesn't have to be expensive, but it also shouldn't be the dollar special. You won't end up tasting the beer or wine, but you will be astonished by and grateful for the soulful taste of the ribs, which will boast an acidity and depth they'd otherwise lack.

Combine the browned meat, vegetables, beer and chicken broth in a Dutch oven, covered tightly. I place a piece of kitchen parchment right on top of the meat to make sure no liquid escapes. Then it is cooked low and

slow. You'll know you're done when the tip of a knife slides into the meat with no resistance. If you became antsy and try to speed up the process by boiling the meat, you'll end up with hockey pucks for dinner.

Assuming you have the time, try to prepare this dish a day ahead, then allow it to cool off and chill overnight. It also freezes beautifully. Not only will the ribs taste better the next day, but by then the fat will have solidified at the top of the pan, allowing you to scoop it off with ease. Then you can warm up the contents and proceed with the recipe.

I serve this dish every Thanksgiving in place of turkey. Nobody misses the turkey.

Sara Moulton was executive chef at *Gourmet* magazine for nearly 25 years, and spent a decade hosting several Food Network shows.

Technology is raising a high bar for high-end mixology

By MICHELLE LOCKE
Associated Press

Want that cocktail shaken, not stirred? How about centrifuged? These days, it's possible as high-tech tools shake things up behind the bar with a razzle-dazzle flair that could make even an old fashioned feel newfangled.

Take the "Highlander," a cocktail offered at Barmini in Washington, D.C. The drink is a combination of bartender Juan Coronado's favorite highland ingredients, scotch and mezcal from Oaxaca, combined with a touch of simple syrup and served in a glass with a floating cloud of creme de cocoa, rosemary, citrus peels and dry ice.

Quite a switch from the usual garnish of a chunk of citrus impaled on a rim.

"It's quite amazing to see this floating cloud and smell the aromas," says Coronado, whose official title is "cocktail innovator" at the ThinkFoodGroup founded by chef Jose Andres, a leader in so-called molecular gastronomy, an avant-garde approach to cooking that borrows techniques and tools from the science lab for the kitchen.

Or, consider the "In the Rocks," created at The Aviary in Chicago. This starts with a water balloon that is dropped in a super chiller, an immersion circulator running on half water, half a neutral grain spirit. This lets the temperature of the bath drop into the negatives and freezes the water balloon from the outside in, explains Micah Melton, beverage director. After seven minutes they pull the balloon out, cut the balloon away, drill a hole and use a syringe to suck out the excess water, leaving a hollow shell.

The prepared cocktail — also super chilled — is then drawn into the syringe and injected into the ice ball. The ball goes into a glass, the glass goes to the table. At the table, a slingshot is used to smash



the ball open and hey presto, your drink is then on the rocks.

While those drinks are both showstoppers, a lot of the bar tech going on right now is behind the scenes.

"I've always held that using new techniques and equipment shouldn't be because of just presentation tricks or making things that are crazy," says Dave Arnold, inventor/partner in Booker and Dax, the high-tech cocktail bar adjacent to Momofuku

SSam Bar in New York City.

One thing you can see if you sit at the bar at Booker and Dax is "nitro muddling," in which liquid nitrogen is put into the mixing cup, freezing whatever's being muddled — mint or basil, for instance — so brittle that it can be turned into a powder. Liquor is added afterward, which prevents oxidation and keeps the colors intense.

High-tech prep going on out of sight includes using a centrifuge to clarify juices and make silky smooth nut milks. Meanwhile, liquid nitrogen is used to chill glasses and

to purge the neck of bottled premixed cocktails, again to avoid oxidation.

Then again, some of the innovations are quite low-tech. Arnold uses droppers of saline solution, much easier to use at a bar than pinches of dry salt, and something that more bartenders are adopting.

And some are extremely tech-y. The ThinkFoodGroup has worked with MIT mathematician John Bush to use 3-D printers to create cocktail garnishes including a "cocktail boat" that floats around the drink driven by a high-proof alcohol "fuel."

For Coronado, Barmini's "cocktail innovator," the road to high-tech mixology began with a sewing machine he bought some years ago. He learned to use it and "from that moment on became friendly with machines."

These days, he boasts an array of equipment worthy of a pharmaceutical lab. Along with centrifuges and a dry ice maker, he also has a rotary vacuum system. One use for the latter is extracting the aromas and flavors from roasted fresh peanuts to create the Veruca Salt cocktail. A Polyscience Sonicprep, which emits ultrasonic sounds waves that create low-heat vibrations, is used to emulsify and create a type of instant barrel-aged flavor. When making a Ramos gin fizz, he puts real vanilla in with gin, turns on the Sonicprep and "we get to create the most amazing vanilla gin profile ever."

"I'm not a scientist, never will be," says Coronado. "But I'm very curious and I like to find my way around things. In the case of cocktails, I'm able to have the luxury of having specialty machines that people in the pharmaceutical industry have."

The technology's been around a while, "it's just we are finally using it for cocktail applications and food applications," he says. "And it's fantastic."

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