

Wintertime comfort-in-bowl is savory, meaty braised beef

By **MELISSA D'ARABIAN**
Associated Press

Ask my daughter Océane what her favorite food is and she will shoot back, without hesitation, “braised ribs.” Who doesn’t love the comforting meaty aroma that fills the house from ribs cooking slowly in Dutch-oven full of savory, gently bubbling liquid? That’s wintertime comfort-in-bowl if you ask me.

Braising is a long-honored method of cooking that coaxes out tenderness and deep flavors from tougher cuts of meat. The basic technique involves a Dutch oven and four main steps: brown the meat and remove, cook the mirepoix (chopped onion, celery and carrot), deglaze the pan with liquid, and finally return the meat to the Dutch oven, cover and let cook low and slow in the oven or on the stovetop until tender. Pork shoulder, brisket and short ribs are excellent candidates for braising with high fat content and tough flesh that need hours to soften.

My whole family loves braised beef ribs, but I wondered how easily I might be able to swap out a leaner cut of meat without alienating my little fans? Turns out: cutting out a bunch of fat was pretty easy. I sliced up a bottom round roast (about 1 1/2 inch-thick) into chubby sticks, about the size and



Melissa d’Arabian via AP

Braised beef.

shape of ribs, and I just called them “boneless ribs” at the dinner table. The kids marveled at the ease of eating without the bones and no one was the wiser on the lower-fat swap. (Plus, I saved money too, which was a bonus.)

Without the full fat and bones, however, I needed a smidge more work to get that richness and flavor of traditional braised ribs. First, I added mushrooms to the braise for earthiness and savory umami with nary an extra calorie to be found — either halved or chopped

will work, depending on whether you want them to be visually present, or disappear.

Second, I learned not to go too low in fat, or the resulting meat will be dry, despite being soaked in sauce. Bottom round was a magical happy spot; top round was less successful. Third, if you can, use the oven for the braising; the stovetop required a little more temperature management. Last, note that braising times will vary, so taste and test. Lower fat meat will not need as long

as the fattier connective tissue-laden cuts we usually braise.

You can even serve your lower fat braise on cooked quinoa, brown rice, or sauteed cauliflower rice for an extra-healthy version. Or do what we did: mix half whole wheat couscous and half quinoa for a happy kid-friendly compromise.

Food Network star Melissa d’Arabian is an expert on healthy eating on a budget. She is the author of the cookbook “Supermarket Healthy.”

BRAISED BEEF RIBS

- Start to finish:** 3 hours, including about 2 hours inactive braising time
Servings: 6
- 2 ½-pound bottom round, (or eye of round) about 1 ½ inches thick
 - 1 tablespoon grapeseed or other neutral cooking oil
 - 2 tablespoons flour
 - 1 yellow onion, chopped, about 1 cup
 - 1 carrot, finely chopped, about ½ cup
 - 1 stalk celery, finely chopped, about ⅓ cup
 - 5 cloves garlic, smashed
 - 2 teaspoons fresh thyme, minced, or 1 teaspoon dried thyme
 - 4 ounces baby bella mushrooms, wiped clean, trimmed and halved or chopped
 - dash of red pepper flakes (optional)
 - 3 tablespoons tomato paste
 - 1 cup red wine
 - 1 ½ cup beef broth
 - 1 bay leaf
 - water, as needed
 - salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 325 F.
Pat the meat dry gently with a paper towel and slice crosswise into boneless “ribs.” Season with salt and pepper and then sprinkle all over with flour, rubbing the flour gently with your fingers to coat meat on all sides. Heat the oil in a large, heavy Dutch oven or braising pot over medium heat.
Brown the meat on all sides until golden and crusty, about 3-4 minutes per side. Remove the meat with tongs and place on a plate and set aside. Add the onion, carrot and celery to the Dutch over (do not wipe it out) and cook, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon, until vegetables begin to soften, about three minutes. Add the garlic, thyme, mushrooms and pepper flakes and cook, stirring until very fragrant, about two more minutes.

Add the tomato paste, and cook for another minute so it caramelizes and deepens in flavor. Deglaze the pan with wine and broth, and let bubble for a minute or two to let most of the alcohol evaporate. Add the meat back into the pan, along with any juices. Add another ½ cup or so of water so the liquid covers the meat about halfway. Cover the Dutch oven with a lid and bake until meat is tender, about 1 ½ to 2 hours. Check the meat halfway through and add a little water if the braising liquid gets low. Serve the meat with the braising liquid spooned on like gravy.

Nutrition information per serving: 280 calories; 69 calories from fat; 8 g fat (3 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 95 mg cholesterol; 223 mg sodium; 10 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 4 g sugar; 36 g protein.



Katie Workman via AP

FRESH LINGUINE WITH SHRIMP AND PEAS IN A PINK CREAM SAUCE

- Serves 6**
- Kosher salt to taste
 - 2 tablespoons olive oil
 - 2 cloves garlic, peeled and lightly crushed
 - 2 pounds peeled and deveined extra-large shrimp
 - 3 tablespoons tomato paste
 - ½ cup dry white wine
 - ½ cup chopped fresh parsley
 - ½ cup chopped fresh basil
 - 1 cup frozen peas
 - 1 cup heavy cream
 - Fresh ground pepper to taste
 - 2 9-ounce packages fresh linguine
- Chopped fresh parsley or basil to serve

Bring a large stockpot of salted water to a boil. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a very large skillet over medium heat, and saute the garlic for 3 or 4 minutes just until it starts to lightly color. Remove the garlic cloves and toss them. Add the shrimp to the skillet and saute for about 3 minutes until they have started to turn pink but are not cooked through, then remove them with a slotted spoon to a plate and set aside.

Add the tomato paste and white wine to the skillet and stir until the tomato paste has dissolved into the wine. Add the parsley, basil, peas and cream and bring to a simmer. Season with pepper. Return the partially cooked shrimp to the sauce and continue to simmer until the peas and shrimp have cooked through, about 2 minutes.

While you are making the sauce, cook the pasta in the boiling water according to package directions, about 4 minutes. Remove 1/2 cup of the cooking water and stir it into the sauce, then drain the pasta. Taste the sauce and see if it needs more salt or pepper.

Return the pasta to the pot, pour the sauce over it and toss to combine. Transfer to a serving bowl, sprinkle with additional parsley or basil if desired, and serve immediately.

Nutrition information per serving: 649 calories; 201 calories from fat; 22 g fat (10 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 245 mg cholesterol; 961 mg sodium; 72 g carbohydrate; 5 g fiber; 7 g sugar; 34 g protein.



Tor Johnson/Hawaii Tourism Authority via AP

This undated photo provided by the Hawaii Tourism Authority shows a waterfront view of Front Street in Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii. Front Street is Lahaina’s main downtown street, home to small businesses and opportunities for sightseeing and people-watching.

A beach town where kings were born

By **JOHN MARSHALL**
Associated Press

LAHAINA, Hawaii — The beach town of Lahaina in western Maui was once the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom, a place where kings were born. It later became a key port at the height of the 19th century whaling boom.

Though it transformed into a mostly tourist area in the 1960s, much of Lahaina’s history can still be found sprinkled around town — including in the roots of a giant banyan tree.

“There’s just a ton of historical spots in town, really precious, sacred places,” said Amy Fuqua, manager of the Lahaina Visitor’s Center.

Located about 40 minutes from Kahului Airport, Lahaina was known in ancient Hawaiian times as Lele, meaning “cruel sun.” It was conquered by Kamehameha the Great in 1795.

Front Street, which runs along the shoreline, was known as King’s Road, where only kings and queens could walk. It’s now the town’s main thoroughfare, dotted with historical sites — 62 in all around town — as well as shops and restaurants with spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean and neighboring islands.

Among the historical sites is the Hauola Stone, a chair-shaped stone used by Hawaiian royalty as a birthing site starting around the 14th century. The smoothed-out rock at the north end of the harbor also was considered to have healing powers.

At the town center is the Lahaina’s famous banyan tree, a 60-foot, multi-trunked tree that covers nearly an acre. Planted in 1873, it is one of the largest banyan trees in the United States and is still used for celebrations, including one for the tree’s birthday every April. It grows



AP Photo/John Marshall

This Nov. 19 photo shows people looking at Lahaina’s banyan tree, rising 60 feet and covering nearly an acre in Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii. The tree’s multiple trunks and large canopy make it a great gathering place for events in town, including an annual birthday celebration for the tree.

new trunks via aerial roots that sink into the ground.

And make sure to visit the tree around sunset, when hundreds of mynah birds sing inside its canopy.

“It’s kind of the center of town,” Fuqua said. “Everyone knows where it’s at. It has an important significance to the town and it feels good under there.”

Not into history? Lahaina offers plenty of other touristy things to do.

Instead of whaling, the harbor has now become the launching point for fishing, parasailing, ocean cruising or whale watching in the winter. The restaurants

along Front Street are top-notch, offering straight-out-of-the-ocean fish daily.

The tiny Lahaina Civic Center transforms from a local events center into the center of the college basketball universe during the Maui Invitational in the days before Thanksgiving every year.

Lahaina also is the hub of western Maui, a gateway to golf courses in Kaanapali and Kapalua, sandy beaches and some of the best snorkeling found anywhere in the world.

“There’s a lot to do here, even for a small town,” Fuqua said. “It’s just a cool town.”