

Braised Root Vegetables with Black Lentils

Deborah Madison, *Local Flavors*, Broadway Books, 2002

The Red Wine Sauce

1/3 cup dried porcini
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 large onion, diced
1 large carrot, diced
2 celery ribs, diced
5 mushrooms and/or mushroom trimmings
parsnip tips and cores, from the vegetables, below
4 garlic cloves, smashed
aromatics: 2 thyme sprigs, 1 bay leaf, 1 (2-inch) rosemary sprig
sea salt and freshly ground pepper
1 tablespoon tomato paste
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 cups Merlot
1 tablespoon mushroom soy sauce, more or less
1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1. Cover the porcini with 1 quart warm water and set aside. Heat the oil in a wide soup pot. Add the vegetables, garlic, and aromatics. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are well browned, about 20 minutes. Season with 1 teaspoon salt and a little pepper.
2. Stir in the tomato paste and flour, then pour in the wine plus the dried mushrooms and their soaking liquid. Vigorously scrape the bottom of the pot to work in the juices, then bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer, covered, for 45 minutes. Strain into a 1-quart measure. You should have about 3 cups. Return it to the pan and simmer until reduced to 2 ½ cups, 15 to 20 minutes. Add the mushroom soy sauce, then taste for salt and season with pepper. Whisk in the butter. Set aside.

The Vegetables

18 to 24 shallots or red pearl onions
3 large or 6 medium parsnips
6 medium carrots or 18 small carrots
5 large mushrooms
1 ½ tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
sea salt and freshly ground pepper
aromatics: 1 bay leaf, 2 thyme sprigs, 1 ½ teaspoons minced rosemary
parsley root or potato puree or rutabaga and potato puree
3 tablespoons chopped parsley, chopped with 1 clove garlic

1. Peel the shallots and separate them where their natural divisions occur. If using pearl onions, parboil for 1 minute, then drain and peel, keeping the root end intact.

2. Peel the parsnips and trim off the skinny tips. Cut the remaining vegetable into 3 segments of equal length. Quarter the thickest section and remove a portion of the core. Halve the middle section and keep the last section whole. (Use tips and cores in the sauce as directed.)
3. Peel the carrots and cut them into 2-to 3-inch lengths. If they're tapered, cut the thick ends into quarters, cut the middle into halves, and keep the last skinny pieces whole. If they're the same diameter from tip to tail, simply halve them lengthwise. Thickly slice the mushrooms.
4. Heat the oil and butter in a wide skillet or Dutch oven. Add the carrots and shallots and cook over medium-high heat, turning occasionally, until well browned in places, about 10 minutes. Add the parsnips and mushrooms and cook for 10 minutes. Season with 1 teaspoon salt, then add the herbs. Pour in 1 cup of the sauce and 1 cup water, bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer until the vegetables are tender when pierced, 20 to 25 minutes. (Add more water if needed – there should be some moisture in the pan.) Season with pepper and set aside until needed.

The Lentils

- ½ cup black “Caviar” Beluga or French green lentils, sorted and rinsed
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter

Cover the lentils with 3 cups water, add the salt, and simmer until tender, about 25 minutes. Drain, then stir in the butter and 1 cup of the sauce.

Rutabaga and Potato Puree

- ½ pound russet or other potatoes
- 1 ½ pounds rutabagas or mixed rutabagas and turnips
- sea salt and freshly ground pepper
- unsalted butter
- freshly grated nutmeg

1. Peel the potatoes and rutabagas, then chop them into chunks, making the rutabagas about half the size of the potatoes (and turnips, if using), since they take longer to cook. Put them in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Add 1 ½ teaspoon salt and bring to a boil. Cook until soft enough to mash, about 25 minutes.
2. Drain, reserving a cup of the cooking water first, then return the vegetables to the pot and mash them with a potato masher, adding as much butter as you like. If the puree is too thick, add some of the reserved liquid or warm milk or cream to thin it. Scrape in a little nutmeg and taste for salt and season with pepper.

Finishing the Dish

Prepare the puree. Reheat the vegetables with the remaining sauce. Mound the puree in the center of 6 pasta plates. Place 2 or 3 spoonfuls of the lentils around the potatoes, then fill in with the vegetables. Spoon the extra sauce around and over the vegetables and lentils, then garnish with the chopped parsley and serve.