

Irish Stew with Pickled Red Cabbage

Ingredients

Salt and pepper

1kg lamb or mutton neck chops, cut into rough 3-4cm chunks

Flour for dusting

Vegetable oil for frying

60g unsalted butter, plus a little more for brushing

450 - 500g onions, sliced

a few sprigs of thyme

800ml lamb or beef stock (or a good quality stock cube dissolved in that amount of water)

1kg large potatoes, thinly sliced

For the pickled cabbage

1 litre red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon pickling spice

1 tablespoon caster sugar

1 tablespoon salt

1 head of red cabbage, quartered and finely shredded

Method

Several weeks ahead, make the pickled red cabbage; in a non-reactive pan, bring the vinegar to the boil with the pepper, pickling spice, sugar and salt, and leave to cool.

Mix the shredded cabbage into the cooled pickling liquid in a non-reactive bowl and leave in the fridge overnight.

The next day, pack the cabbage into sterilized jars and top up with the vinegar. Seal the jars and store in a cool place for a minimum of 4 weeks, or up to 12 months.

When you want to cook the hot pot, prepare the oven to 220°C/gas 7. Season the pieces of lamb and dust with flour. Heat a couple of tablespoons of vegetable oil in a heavy-based frying pan and fry the lamb, a few pieces at a time, on a high heat until nicely coloured.

Clean the pan and heat another couple of tablespoons of vegetable oil, then fry the onions until they begin to colour. Add the butter and continue to cook for a few minutes until the onions soften. Dust them with a tablespoon of flour, stir well and gradually add the lamb stock, stirring to avoid lumps, then sprinkle in the thyme. Bring to the boil, season with salt and pepper, and simmer for about 10 minutes.

Now you're ready to assemble the hot pot. Take an ovenproof casserole dish with a lid or similar, cover the bottom with a layer of potatoes, followed by a layer of meat with a little sauce, then another layer of potatoes. Continue until the meat and sauce has all been used.

Finish the top with nicely overlapping potato slices. Brush the top with a little of the sauce and cook in the oven for about half an hour, then turn the oven down to 130°C/gas 1 and leave in the oven for 2 hours.

Remove the lid from the dish and turn the oven back up to 220°C/gas 7. Brush the top of the hot pot with a little melted butter and return to the oven to allow the potatoes to brown for a final half hour.

Serve piping hot, with the pickled red cabbage.