

BŒUF BOURGUIGNONNE

(Serves 6 people)

This is my adaptation of the famous French classic: beef braised in Burgundy, garnished with cubes of bacon, button onions and mushrooms. If you want to cut the cost then try using dry cider, which gives different results but is every bit as good.

2 lb chuck steak (900 g), cut into 2 inch (5 cm) squares
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion, sliced
1 heaped tablespoon plain flour
15 fl oz red Burgundy (425 ml)
2 cloves garlic, chopped
2 sprigs fresh thyme or 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1 bay leaf
12 oz small onions (350 g)
8 oz smoked or green streaky bacon (225 g), bought in one piece then cut into cubes
4 oz dark-gilled mushrooms (110 g), sliced
salt and freshly milled black pepper

Pre-heat the oven to gas mark 1, 275°F (140°C).

Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil to sizzling point in a large flameproof casserole and sear the chunks of beef – a few pieces at a time – to a rich, dark brown on all sides. Using a slotted spoon, remove the meat as it browns to a plate. Next add the sliced onion to the casserole and brown that a little too. Now return the meat to the casserole, sprinkle in the flour, stirring it around to soak up all the juices, then gradually pour in the Burgundy – stirring all the time. Add the chopped garlic and herbs, season with salt and pepper, put the lid on and cook in the oven for 2 hours.

Then, using a bit more oil, fry the button onions and cubes of bacon in a small frying pan to colour them lightly, and add them to the casserole together with the sliced mushrooms. Put the lid back on and cook for a further hour. The French accompaniment of potatoes *à la boulangère* and green salad would be good with this, or else tiny new potatoes and *ratatouille*.