

Peposo

Braised Short Ribs with Peppercorns

This is my adaptation of a classic Tuscan fall dish. One variation appears in Pino Luongo's *Simply Tuscan*, another in Bugiali's book. The 2 recipes vary from 1 to 4 tablespoons in the amount of black peppercorn they suggest. Luongo's recipe calls for butternut squash, an excellent addition. Both recipes call for beef stew meat whereas I substituted the short ribs.

Cooked this way, the peppercorns provide flavor rather than raw heat. A good starting point for the amount of peppercorns is 2 - 2-1/2 tablespoons.

To serve 6-8 with ample leftovers:

Obtain:

- 12 short ribs of beef
- 1 bottle red wine, preferably Tuscan such as Chianti or Brunello
- 2 - 4 T crushed black peppercorns according to taste
- 2/3 cup diced onion
- 2/3 cup diced celery
- 2/3 cup diced carrot
- 10 Roma tomatoes
- 3 C chicken stock or more as needed
- 1 large butternut squash
- several sprigs of fresh thyme
- 2 bay leaves

Proceed:

1. Saute the ribs in a small amount of olive oil over high heat in a dutch oven until well browned. Reserve the meat and let the pan cool slightly.
2. Saute the onion, celery and carrots over moderate heat until softened, 10 - 15 minutes. Meanwhile, core, seed and roughly chop the tomatoes
3. Bruise the thyme, add it and the tomatoes to the pan with the other vegetables. Add the peppercorns. Simmer until the tomatoes reduce to a thick sauce. Remove the sauce and reserve.
4. Return the ribs to the pan, add the wine and bring to a high simmer. Cook uncovered until the wine reduces to about 1/3 of its original volume. Turn the ribs as needed to ensure that all sides are exposed to the wine.
5. Remove the meat and reserve. Add the tomato sauce and the chicken stock and bring to a simmer. Meanwhile, peel the squash and cut the main portion into 1 inch cubes. Add half the squash to the tomatoes.
6. Return the meat to the pan with the vegetables. Cover and braise for about 2 hours until the meat is completely tender.
7. Remove the ribs and reserve. Reduce the sauce over high heat, then add the remaining squash and cook over moderate heat until tender.
8. Return the ribs to the pan to reheat. Serve immediately.

Serving suggestion:

Serve this over grilled or toasted polenta.