

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 80 (2014)
Heft: [1]

Rubrik: Chuchichäschtli (kitchen cupboard) : lamb ragout (stew) with spinach polenta

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Chuchichäschtli (kitchen cupboard)

Lamb ragout (stew) with spinach polenta

Ingredients (for four people)

- ♥ 2 small onions
- ♥ 200g carrots
- ♥ 2 garlic cloves
- ♥ 1 spring onion
- ♥ 750g lamb meat
- ♥ 2 tbsp olive oil
- ♥ 300 ml dry red wine
- ♥ 750 ml bouillon (3 tsp chicken stock)
- ♥ salt and pepper
- ♥ 2 bay/laurel leaves
- ♥ 500 ml milk
- ♥ 1 lemon
- ♥ 1 bunch spinach
- ♥ 120g fine polenta
- ♥ 20 g butter

Method

1. Peel the onions and carrots. Finely chop onions, Cut carrots lengthwise into quarters and cut into dice-pieces. Peel and finely chop garlic. Roughly chop green onions.

2. Fry lamb in a pan in hot olive oil on all sides, add onions and deglaze with red wine. Allow the fluid to cook in, and keep browning the meat.

3. Add carrots, spring onion and cover meat with bouillon, until the pieces of meat are just covered. Season with salt, pepper and laurel leaves. Cover and cook on medium heat for 75-90 minutes. Stir from time to time and possibly add some more liquid.

4. In the meantime, for the polenta, bring the milk with salt and finely grated lemon zest to a boil. Add polenta while stirring and take pan from the fire, cover and rest for 25 minutes. Finely cut spinach and fold into polenta with butter.

5. Taste lamb stew again with salt, pepper and lemon juice, and serve with polenta.

(After you browned the meat, you could use a slow cooker and double the cooking time.)

By Marcel Rüedi

Mmmmm!



Sweet chilli jam

Makes 4 small jars

This has a kick, but won't blow your head off and goes well with any selection of cold cuts of meat

Ingredients

- ♥ 8 red peppers, deseeded and roughly chopped
- ♥ 10 red chillies, roughly chopped
- ♥ finger-sized piece fresh root ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- ♥ 8 garlic cloves, peeled
- ♥ 400g can cherry tomatoes
- ♥ 750g golden caster sugar
- ♥ 250ml red wine vinegar

Method

Tip the peppers, chillies (with seeds), ginger and garlic into a food processor, then whizz until very finely chopped. Scrape into a heavy-bottomed pan with the tomatoes, sugar and vinegar, then bring everything to the boil. Skim off any scum that comes to the surface, then turn the heat down to a simmer and cook for about 50 mins, stirring occasionally.

Once the jam is becoming sticky, continue cooking for 10-15 mins more, stirring frequently so that it doesn't catch and burn. It should now look like thick, bubbling lava. Cool slightly, transfer to sterilised jars, then leave to cool completely. Keeps for three months in a cool, dark cupboard – refrigerate once opened.

Contributed by Melissa Lanz

Sourced from Good Food magazine, December 2008

Summer garden diary

During the hot humid weather in February, make sure you keep the garden watered regularly to prevent heat stress. If your plants dry out, they will start to set seed or 'bolt' for the skies. This makes the edible parts taste bitter and useless for eating.

Keep picking those chillies, tomatoes and peppers. Chillies don't succumb to powdery mildew or blossom end rot, and one plant is usually enough to provide enough chillies for a family for a year.

Potted seedlings planted in November can be grown in pots or raised garden beds mulched with sawdust. Growing in pots makes it easy to bring them indoors to finish ripening if the autumn weather turns cold. They need plenty of water and liquid feeding.

To preserve your chillies, harvest the branch when the fruit is just starting to shrivel, and hang to dry or bind into a wreath. Chillies can also be frozen whole, by placing in snap lock bags and removing the air to prevent freezer burn.

Simply remove when needed for cooking: No defrosting required, as they slice easier while still frozen.

Alternatively, make chilli jam/sauce with the glut to enjoy all year round.

By Melissa Lanz

