



Braised Root Vegetables with Black Lentils and Red Wine Sauce | SERVES 6

This dish is for when you want to fuss a bit and make a celebration of root vegetables or for when you want an impressive vegetarian meal. It involves four elements: the sauce, the vegetables, the lentils, and some form of mashed potatoes or root vegetable puree. None of the parts are difficult or even terribly time consuming in and of themselves. However, you might choose to cook them over the course of 2 days. Only the potato-based puree is best made at the last minute, and even it can be held for an hour or so in a double boiler.

If making the dish from start to finish, start with the sauce, adding trimmings, such as carrot ends and parsnip cores, as you work. While it's simmering, prepare the vegetables and cook the lentils. You can have the potatoes scrubbed, cut, and waiting in a pot of cold water to cook close to serving.

THE RED WINE SAUCE

½ 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 2½ 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
1½ tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
sea salt and freshly ground pepper
aromatics: 1 bay leaf, 2 thyme
sprigs, 1½ teaspoons minced
rosemary
Parsley Root and Potato Puree or
Rutabaga and Potato Puree (page
217 or 216)
3 tablespoons chopped parsley,
chopped with 1 garlic clove

THE LENTILS

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

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 the 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 middles 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.

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.

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 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.