

Braising ~ Simple as 1-2-3

Ingredients:

Any Hilltop Pastures Meat cuts – the leaner and less forgiving the better (best part is these are the least costly cuts too!!)

Strong onions ~ Onions are the heart of braised dishes around the world

Garlic

Aromatic Veggies of your choosing

Coarse salt (sea salt)

Braising Liquid ~ simple as water or any other liquid of your choosing

Do this:

- ✓ Salt the meat. This **MUST BE** done 1 to 3 days in advance of cooking. If you don't salt at least one day before, DON'T cook it or you will ruin that beautiful cut of meat. What happens is that instead of the salt having time to break down the meat's cell walls and be reabsorbed you actually pull what little moisture there is in a lean cut out by not giving the salt time to do its work. Go ahead and apply the salt liberally, it has been said that meat that is going to be braised cannot be salted too early or too heavily. I can't stress enough that the salt must have time to work or the meat will taste salty and be dried out.
- ✓ After the salt has had time to work its magic it's time to start the braising. Begin by dicing those onions. Use the strongest onions you can find. Don't bother with those sweet varieties like Vidalia, we want something that is gonna have the tears rolling down your cheeks! Did you know that the stronger the onion the better it is for you? In a 2004 test-tube study, extracts of strongly flavored onions destroyed 95% of human cancer cells of the liver and colon and the sweet onions only killed 10%.
- ✓ Sauté the onions, garlic, and other veggies. What is unique about braising is that you have the opportunity to improve a meat's inherent flavor with the vegetables cooked with it. We prefer to sauté using our own rendered lard but olive oil or butter will work fine too.
- ✓ Brown the meat. Remove the veggies from the pan and place the meat in the remaining lard and give the meat a nice browning on all sides.
- ✓ Place all the ingredients in a covered pot. Veggies first, we don't want our meat sitting directly on the pot's hot floor.
- ✓ Add the braising liquid. You can use water, wine, stock, milk, juice, just about anything you want. Milk is the most problematic and variable and I would not recommend it for the first timer. Plain water works just fine and if given enough time will break down the toughest fibers.
- ✓ Now sit back and let the pot simmer **BELOW** the boil for a long time. A braise should **never** be allowed to get over the boiling point of 212 degrees. The meat should be cooked until it "relaxes" and becomes very tender. All meats begin the cooking process by tensing up. It is a lengthy time at low temperatures that will eventually cause them to relax. This can vary, but usually two to four hours will get the job done.
- ✓ The last step is to EAT. Yum. You can reduce some of the liquid if you so choose and make a nice gravy.

Enjoy