

Slow Braised Beef Ragu by Antonio Cruz Vaamonde



As the weather cools down, this is the kind of meal that's perfect for a cosy night in. It's slow cooked, rich and comforting. Made with a simple, affordable cut of beef and a few pantry staples, this ragu turns into something seriously special after a few hours.

Recipe supplied by Antonio Cruz Vaamonde.

Ingredients

Ragu

1 kg diced beef (can be swapped for beef mince if you're short on time)

2 carrots, finely chopped

1 onion, finely chopped

3 celery stalks, finely chopped

4 cloves garlic, minced

3 tbsp Black & Gold tomato paste

300 ml tomato passata

1L beef stock

½ cup red wine

Salt and pepper

3 bay leaves

2 parmesan rinds (optional, for extra richness)

Olive oil

To Serve

Pasta of choice (Black & Gold Penne works amazing here)

Parmesan cheese, finely grated

Fresh parsley, chopped

Method:

1. Build the base
2. Season the beef generously with salt and pepper.
3. Heat a drizzle of olive oil in a large heavy pot over high heat. Sear the beef until browned on all sides, then remove and set aside.
4. Reduce heat to medium-low, add a bit more olive oil, then add the onion, carrot and celery (soffritto). Season lightly and cook for 20–30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft and deeply fragrant. Take your time here; this is where the flavour builds.
5. Build the sauce
6. Increase heat to high and stir in the tomato paste. Cook for 2–3 minutes until it darkens slightly.
7. Pour in the red wine and let it simmer until mostly reduced.
8. Return the beef to the pot, then add the passata, beef stock, bay leaves and parmesan rinds (if using). Stir to combine.
9. Bring to a gentle boil.
10. Slow cook
11. Cover with a lid and cook in the oven at 180°C for 2–2½ hours. Or, cook on the stove at a very gentle simmer, stirring occasionally. Cook until the beef is tender and easily pulls apart.
12. Finish
13. Remove the beef, shred it with two forks, then return it to the sauce.
14. If the sauce has reduced too much, add a splash of water or stock to loosen.
15. Cook your pasta according to packet instructions. Reserve a little pasta water before draining.
16. Add the ragu to the pasta with a splash of pasta water and toss until glossy and well combined.