

Churston Traditional

FARM SHOP

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CHURSTON FARM SHOP RECIPES NOVEMBER 18

The first frost of the autumn always acts as a trigger for a complete change in what we cook and eat. Salads and light meals are off the list: we need something warm, nourishing and above all comforting, something to fill the kitchen with reassuring smells of an evening.

And it's surprising, really, how simple it is to prepare winter food. Things go into pots, pots go into ovens and that's about it. There's no need for elaborate sauces if you don't fancy making them – though there's a lot less to making a decent sauce than a lot of people believe.

And although British winter cooking can appear a lot plainer than other countries' when you have decent, grass-fed beef and lamb and wonderfully deep-flavoured root vegetables what more could you ask?

Here are two recipes to illustrate the point, the second actually a wartime favourite which is a brilliant way of using up left-over roast lamb and which needs nothing more than some fresh, crusty bread by way of an accompaniment.

The chicken dish is a French one and the paprika gives it a genuinely warming flavour.

HEARTY BEEF STEW

Ingredients for four. Kilo of beef skirt, cubed, three tablespoons flour, two teaspoons freshly-ground black pepper, teaspoon salt, three large carrots, three onions, one large swede, tablespoon, two tablespoons duck fat, tablespoon Marmite.

Method. Place the flour, salt and pepper on a baking sheet and bake for ten minutes in an oven preheated to 200C gas mark 6. Peel and thickly slice the carrots, peel and thinly slice the onions, peel the swede and cut into chunks. Melt the duck fat in a casserole, toss the beef in the seasoned flour and fry a few pieces at a time, removing with a slotted spoon once browned. Add the onions and fry until brown then add the carrots and swede and cook on for five minutes, turning to give a little colour. Replace the meat, sprinkle any left-over flour over the top then add enough hot water to just cover. Stir in the Marmite, cover and place in an oven heated to 190C gas mark 5 for an hour and a half. Check the seasoning. If the gravy appears a little too thin remove the lid and replace in the oven for another 10 minutes.

LAMB HASH

Ingredients. Whatever lean, cold roast lamb you have, cut into small chunks, 50g reserved lamb fat, two large onions, halved and thinly sliced, two large carrots, grated, tablespoon flour, dessertspoon Marmite, hot water, sea salt, freshly-ground black pepper.

Method. Heat the fat in a frying pan, add the onion and cook for seven or eight minutes to soften. Add the grated carrot and cook for another three to four minutes. Sprinkle on the flour, mix in well and gradually add enough water to make a thick sauce. Add the Marmite and lamb and season well and simmer gently for 10 minutes. Serve with steamed Savoy cabbage.

CHICKEN CASSOULET

Ingredients for four to six. One medium to large chicken, 300g dried flageolet beans, litre of chicken stock (preferably home-made) one large onion stuck with four cloves, two bay leaves, large sprig of thyme, tablespoon each fine sea salt and mild paprika, two tablespoons olive oil, six large, unpeeled garlic cloves, glass white wine.

Method. Cover the beans with plenty of water in a large bowl and leave to soak overnight. Drain and place in a pan with the chicken stock, onion and herbs, bring to the boil, and simmer for 35 minutes. Don't add any salt because that will make them tough. Joint the chicken, dividing the legs into two and cutting off the wings to leave about a third of the breast attached to each. Heat the olive oil in a large, lidded casserole. Mix the paprika and salt together on a plate, roll the chicken pieces in the mix to coat well and add to the casserole with the garlic cloves. Brown the chicken gently for a few minutes then increase the heat, add the wine and allow it to bubble off. Remove the onion and herbs from the beans and add them with enough of the stock to cover all the meat. Cover and simmer gently on a low heat or place in the oven at 180C gas mark 4 for an hour and a half.

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