

# Offally good comfort food

Offal has made it on to the menus of even the most fashionable eateries – and heart, liver and kidneys make delicious, cost-effective meals for all the family

Photographer: MARIELOU AVERY Food writer LINDY WILDSMITH



## INGREDIENTS

- 1 jointed oxtail
- 2 heaped tbsp plain flour seasoned with plenty of salt and pepper
- dripping or olive oil for frying
- 2 large onions, thinly sliced
- 400g carrots, thinly sliced
- 2 good shakes Worcester sauce
- a small bunch fresh thyme leaves
- 1 tbsp finely chopped rosemary leaves
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 glass red or white wine
- 500ml stock

## Oxtail casserole serves 2 - 4

*This is one of the great joys of autumn eating. When cooked slowly with onions and root vegetables, the meat becomes meltingly tender. If you have an Aga, you can put it in the bottom oven and leave it to cook, oh so slowly, overnight. Like all slow-cooked food, the flavour improves for resting. Any fat that collects on the surface of the meat can be poured or skimmed off and kept in a pot in the fridge for later use. One oxtail feeds two people generously and there will be enough left over to make a delicious soup or pasta dish.*

**1** Pre-heat oven to 160°C/gas mark 2-3. Coat the oxtail in the seasoned flour. Add enough dripping or oil to cover the base of a pre-heated heavy-based pan. Add the coated oxtail and fry until golden all over, turning the pieces from time to time.

**2** Transfer the fried oxtail to a casserole dish. Layer the meat with the onions and carrots, adding the Worcester Sauce, thyme, chopped rosemary and mustard, then season with salt and pepper. Pour in the wine and add enough stock to cover. Put the lid on the casserole.

**3** Put in the pre-heated oven for 2 hours and leave to stand overnight; alternatively, cook overnight in a very low oven or slow-cooker. Pour or skim off any excess fat and leave to rest. Discard thyme stalks.

**4** When ready to eat, re-heat and serve with roast pumpkin and other seasonal vegetables.

*Oxtail casserole nutritional information - per serving; Energy (kcal) 620, Fat (g) 34, of which saturates (g) 12, Carbohydrate (g) 22, of which sugars, (g) 12, Salt (g) 2*

**INGREDIENTS**

**SUET PASTRY**

- 180g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp dried thyme leaves
- Salt and white pepper
- 90g suet
- 125 ml cold water
- Greaseproof paper and string or a pudding cloth
- 1L pudding basin

**STEAK AND KIDNEY FILLING**

- 350g skirt steak
- 125g ox kidney (or mushrooms)
- ½ large onion, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp dried thyme leaves
- A good shake of Worcester sauce
- 1 heaped tbsp plain flour
- Salt and black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 200ml good stock or water, cold

**ONION GRAVY**

- 1 tbsp dripping
- 3 shallots, finely sliced
- 1 heaped tbsp flour
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 500ml stock
- a few drops of gravy browning (optional)

**Steak and kidney pudding** serves 4 - 6

*The ultimate comfort food. If you're not a kidney fan, try mushrooms and if you prefer a pie to a pudding, cook the filling first and cover with a pastry topping. For these recipes, it's best to use skirt, the traditional lean and tender steak cut used for making Cornish pasties.*

**To make the pudding**

**1** Start by cutting the steak and kidney into bite-sized pieces, 1cm x 2cm. Add the finely chopped onion together with plenty of seasoning and thyme leaves. Mix and put to one side.

**2** To make the pastry, sieve the self-raising flour into a large bowl. Add the thyme, salt and pepper and suet. Mix quickly with a knife, then add the water. Mix with your hands to make a dough - if it does not come together, add more water. It should be soft and stretchy. Shape into a ball and flatten on a floured work surface with your palm. Roll into a circle the size of a large dinner plate, no more than 4mm thick. Cut out a 'pie slice', about a third of the circle, roll into a ball and reserve.

**3** Half fill a steamer with water, bring to the boil. Transfer the rolled pastry to the pudding basin. Line base and sides, sealing cut edges with water.

**4** Add plenty of Worcestershire sauce to the prepared meat. Then add the flour, mix again to coat and fill the pastry-lined basin with the meat. Push the bay leaf into the centre and add the stock or water to just below the top of the meat.

**5** Roll out the remaining ball of pastry into a circle the size of the top of the pudding basin. Paint the edge of the pastry lining with cold water, put the lid on top and seal all around the rim.

**6** Cut a large square of non-stick baking parchment to make a cover for the pudding. Make a box pleat through the middle, then tie down over the pudding, under the lip of the basin.

**7** Transfer the pudding to the steamer basket and cook gently for 2-3 hours. Stand for 30 minutes and then remove and discard the baking parchment. Carefully loosen the pudding with a palette knife, turn it out onto a serving dish and serve with seasonal vegetables and onion gravy.

**Alternatively, make a pie**

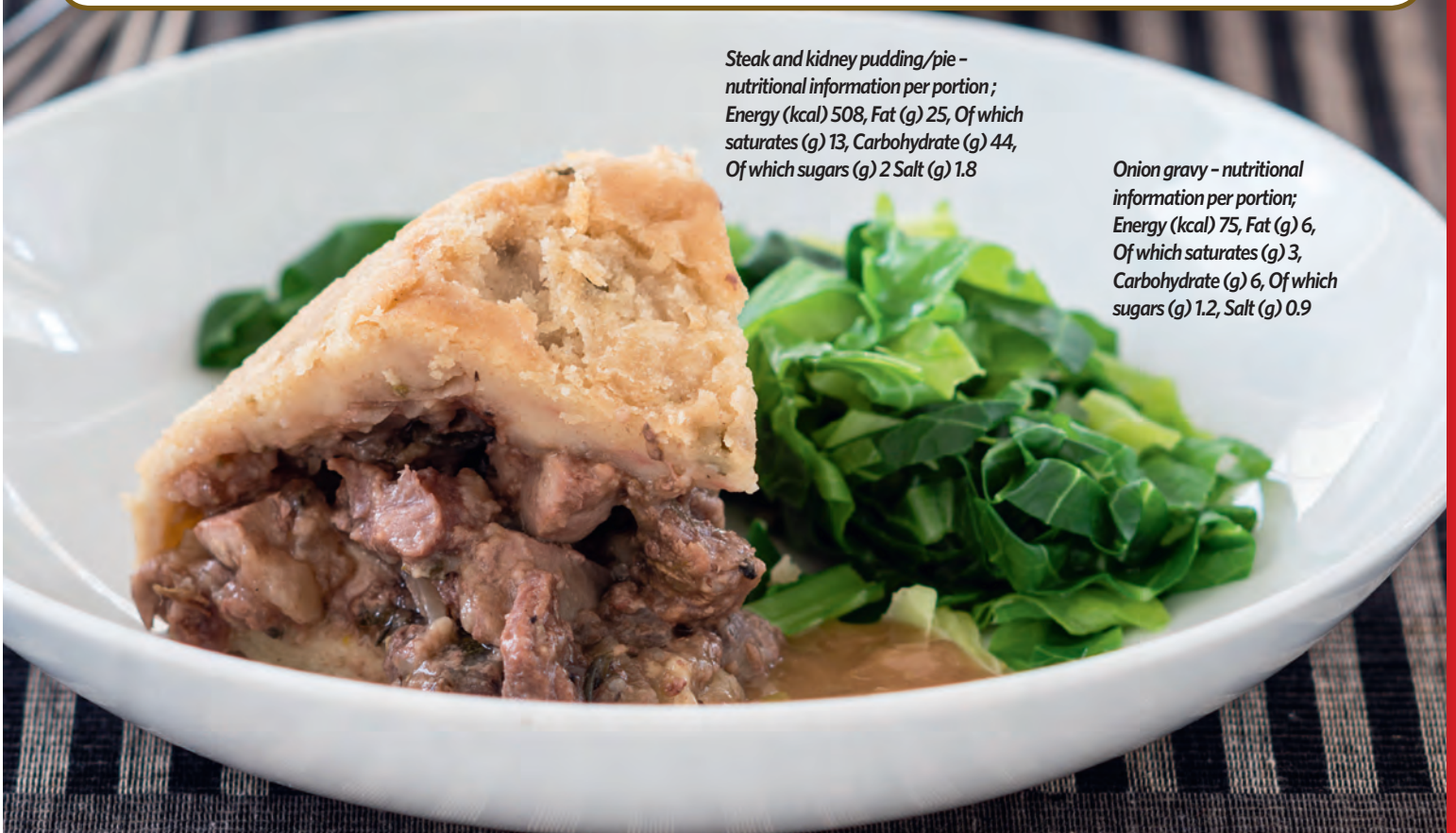
**A** Cut the steak and kidney into bite size pieces, 1cm x 2cm, put in a heavy-based casserole dish with the finely chopped onion and other ingredients. Stir well, cover with a lid and put in a low oven, 140°C/gas mark 1 for 2 hours and leave to cool. Transfer to a pie dish.

**B** Roll out the pastry (see step 2, left) on a floured work surface into a thick oval. Cover the pie dish. Make two V-shaped incisions in the middle, crimp edges and bake in a hot oven, around 180°C/gas mark 4 until pastry is golden and filling piping hot.

**To make the onion gravy**

**1** Melt the dripping in a frying pan. When hot, add the sliced shallots and 1 tbsp water. Cook over a low heat for 10-15 minutes or until the shallots are soft, adding a little extra water if the pan dries out.

**2** Add the flour and stir well. Cook for a minute or two, then start to add the stock, little by little, stirring all the while to create a smooth, thick sauce, then simmer for 10 minutes or so. Stir from time to time and add gravy browning if you are using it. Sieve the gravy, or serve as it is.



*Steak and kidney pudding/pie - nutritional information per portion; Energy (kcal) 508, Fat (g) 25, Of which saturates (g) 13, Carbohydrate (g) 44, Of which sugars (g) 2 Salt (g) 1.8*

*Onion gravy - nutritional information per portion; Energy (kcal) 75, Fat (g) 6, Of which saturates (g) 3, Carbohydrate (g) 6, Of which sugars (g) 1.2, Salt (g) 0.9*



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*Chicken liver, sweet onion and marjoram parfait - nutritional information per portion; Energy (kcal) 576, Fat (g) 35 - saturates (g) 20, Carbohydrate (g) 42, - sugars (g) 5, Salt (g) 4.6*

**PARFAIT**

- 20g butter
- 100ml white wine
- 50ml Marsala wine
- 200g finely sliced onion
- 2-3 tbsp fresh marjoram or flat leaf parsley
- 350g chicken livers
- 2 small whole eggs and 1 small egg white
- salt and pepper
- 200g butter, melted
- 1 baguette or filone (Italian yeast bread) cut into 1cm thick slices. Or use crostini (see below).
- 2 extra tbsps finely chopped parsley or marjoram for serving

**CROSTINI**

- 1 baguette
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 2 or 3 cloves garlic, cut in half cross-wise (optional).

**Chicken liver, sweet onion and marjoram parfait Serves 6-8**

*Parfait is a silky smooth chicken liver paté enriched with eggs and traditionally laced with port or brandy or Madeira - I've used Marsala wine. This recipe freezes well and makes a great light lunch, starter or canapé served with hot crusty bread, toast or crostini.*

**To make the parfait**

- 1.** Pre-heat the oven to 150°C/gas mark 2.
- 2.** Heat 20g butter in a heavy-based saucepan over low heat; add the finely sliced onion, wine, marjoram or parsley; stir and cover. Cook slowly for 20-30 minutes until tender, adding a little water to prevent burning.
- 3.** When the onion is very soft, turn the heat down to its lowest setting, add the remaining butter and melt. Add plenty of seasoning and leave to cool.
- 4.** Put the liver, onions and melted butter in a mouli-legumes and mill to a smooth, runny paste. Stir well, then mix in the eggs.
- 5.** Using a ladle, fill the ramekin dishes to within a centimetre of the top, covering each one loosely with a small square of greased foil.

- 6.** Transfer to a roasting tin, half filled with cold water and cook for 30-40 minutes.

- 7.** Serve the parfait on warm crostini (see below), crusty bread or toast. Garnish with freshly chopped herbs or a few gherkins

**To make the Crostini Makes 30**

- 1.** Set oven at 210°C, gas mark 6/7.
- 2.** Cut the baguette diagonally into one centimetre thick slices. Arrange on a baking tray and drizzle with olive oil. Set in a hot oven and cook until golden, then turn and cook on the other side. Take out of the oven. Rub one side of the crostini with a cut clove of garlic.
- 3.** Serve topped with the chicken liver parfait. Alternatively, you could make the crostini alone and top with confit or potted meat.