

Portuguese Pot Roast, Root Vegetables, and Parsley-Sundried Tomato Topping

Alcatra com Tubérculos e Cobertura de Salsa e Tomates Secos



The marinade

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (177 grams) dry red wine
6 cloves garlic, smashed
2 tablespoons (30 grams) red wine vinegar
1 tablespoon (14 grams) fine sea salt
2 teaspoons (4 grams) Portuguese spice blend (p. 21)
1 bay leaf, crumbled

The pot roast

5 pounds (2.3 kilograms) boneless beef short ribs, cut into 3-inch pieces
6 ounces (170 grams) linguica, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes
2 ounces (57 grams) smoked slab bacon, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (280 grams) onion compote (p. 34)
Equal parts white wine and chicken stock (p. 39) to just cover the meat
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 grams) puréed tomato confit (p. 33) or tomato sauce
1 tablespoon (7 grams) sweet Hungarian paprika
1 tablespoon (6 grams) sopas spice blend (p. 21), wrapped in a cheesecloth pouch
Fine sea salt

The root vegetables

About 1 pound (450 grams) fingerling potatoes
2 - 3 small red beets
2 - 3 yellow beets
1 fennel bulb, cut into 6 wedges
3 tablespoons (25 grams) garlic butter (p. 33)

The parsley-sundried tomato topping

½ cup (45 grams) sundried tomatoes, diced small
2 teaspoons (9 grams) lemon juice
2 teaspoons (9 grams) balsamic vinegar
¼ cup (4 grams) roughly chopped flat leaf parsley
Fine sea salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Slivered almonds, optional

The word “alcatra” may come from the Portuguese or Arabic word for “rump” or “piece” (of meat) respectively, or it could relate to alguidar, the name of a traditional Portuguese clay cooking vessel. Regardless of its origins, alcatra to me means Portuguese pot roast – and just hearing the word gets my taste buds pumping. This recipe is typical of the Azorean island of Terceira, where alcatra is customarily cooked and served in an alguidar.

Beef is the most popular meat for this dish, but my favorite alcatra meat is wild boar shoulder, although you can get great results with most stewing meats, including lamb, beef shank, or even goat. I would strongly advise preparing the marinade and marinating the meat 2 days before you’re planning to serve the dish and roasting the meat a day ahead and allowing it to sit overnight. Then make the vegetables and topping and warm up the meat on the day you’ll serve the meal. Not only will this make your life easier, but the flavors will be more deliciously intense. The parsley-sundried tomato topping isn’t part of the traditional alcatra, but it adds aromatic life to the dish, and tempers – just enough – the heaviness of the roasted meat and vegetables.

For the marinade: Combine all the ingredients in a bowl. Place the short rib pieces in a plastic bag and pour the marinade over it, ensuring it is well covered. Seal and allow to sit in the refrigerator for at least 12 hours. Flip the meat around in the bag from time to time to marinate all the cuts of meat thoroughly.

When ready to cook the roast (preferably 1 day ahead), separate the meat from the marinade and set aside. Pour the marinade into a small pot and slowly heat on the stove. Bring the liquid to a simmer but do not allow to boil. When the animal proteins rise to the top and solidify, skim the liquid to remove the hardened proteins. Strain the liquid through a fine-meshed strainer and keep aside. This strained liquid will be used again in the pot roast itself so its rich flavor is not wasted.

For the pot roast: Heat a large pot and a sauté pan. Retrieve the marinated meat and dust with flour. When the sauté pan is hot, add oil and brown the meat in the pan. Meanwhile, add oil to the pot and brown the linguíça and bacon in the pot.

When the meat in the sauté pan is browned, add it to the pot with the linguíça and bacon. Deglaze the sauté pan with some wine or chicken stock and add the liquid to the pot.

Add the remaining ingredients to the pot and bring to a simmer. Cover with a lid that doesn’t cover the entire pot or, even better, with a parchment paper lid (page 292). You can make a parchment lid by folding a square of parchment in half to make a rectangle, then in half again so that the paper is folded into a square a quarter of the size of the original parchment piece. Then fold in half to form a triangle, and take the long side of the triangle and fold it so that it reaches the edge of the shorter side of the triangle. Now take this flat cone-looking paper to your pot and place it across the radius of the pot. Using your nail, mark where the pot ends on the non-pointed side of the paper. Cut a slightly curved arc where your nail marked, and then cut the point off the triangle (about ½ an inch). Unfold the paper and you have a

perfectly sized lid with a hole that you can rest lightly on the food in your pot. This type of lid is ideal for pot roasts as it allows some of the liquid to reduce by evaporation without drying out the meat.

Bake the pot (with the parchment lid or other incomplete cover) at 275 degrees Fahrenheit (135° C). After about 1 ½ hours, stir the contents of the pot and taste for flavor. Add salt if necessary. Cover again and bake for another 1 ½ hours or until the meat is fork tender. At this point you can leave the pot uncovered or covered depending on how much broth you desire.

The pot roast will have an even richer flavor the next day, so keep the meat in the pot and refrigerate overnight. When ready to heat the next day, slowly bring the alcatra to a simmer and serve.

For the root vegetables: About 1 ½ hours before serving the alcatra, preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit (190° C). Add all the whole beets to a roasting pan with ½ cup of water and bake tightly covered with foil for 50 – 60 minutes or until a knife easily passes through the beets. Meanwhile, put the potatoes and fennel bulb wedges into a bowl, toss with some olive oil and about ½ a teaspoon of fine sea salt, and then transfer to a roasting pan and roast until tender, about 1 hour. Set aside and keep warm.

When the beets are cooked and tender, drain the water and allow to cool slightly. Peel and cut the beets into wedges. Set aside and keep warm.

For the parsley-sundried tomato topping: Combine the sundried tomatoes, lemon juice, and balsamic vinegar in a bowl about 3 hours before serving. Stir every half hour or so to help the sundried tomatoes absorb the liquids. Shortly before plating the meal, add parsley to the sundried tomato mixture and toss. Enhance flavor with salt and pepper to taste. Add slivered almonds, if desired.

To serve: Toss the root vegetables with some garlic butter. If using red beets, toss them separately. Place a generous portion of meat and root vegetables onto each plate and sprinkle the meat with parsley-sundried tomato topping.