

THE ART OF

# BRAISING



# Braising 101

Braising refers to gently cooking in a covered pot with a little bit of liquid — either in the oven or on the stove. The method dates back to a time before ovens when cooks would combine ingredients in a tightly covered pot and bury the pot in the embers of a gentle fire. (The term comes from the French word for embers: braise.)

## The Proper Tools for the Job

The best pot for braising is a Dutch oven – a heavy, lidded pot that can go in the oven or on the burner. The slow, even heat of a classic enamel-coated cast iron Dutch oven creates the perfect environment for the gentle, slow heat of a braise. If you don't have a Dutch oven, improvise using the heaviest pot with the tightest lid you can find. For best results, choose a pot that fits the ingredients snugly.

## Which meats and poultry are best for braising?

The magic of braising is how the gentle, moist heat tenderizes even the toughest cuts of meat and poultry. Braising is typically done with larger cuts and bone-in poultry. Good choices include:

<b>Beef</b>	Chuck Roast, Short Ribs, Shoulder Roast, Brisket, Rump Roast, Bottom Round
<b>Buffalo</b>	Chuck Roast, Short Ribs
<b>Lamb</b>	Shoulder, Leg, Shank, Breast
<b>Pork</b>	Shoulder Roast, Boston Butt, Country-Style Ribs, Belly
<b>Poultry</b>	Turkey Thighs and Legs
<b>Veal</b>	Shanks

# Simple Steps to Successful Braising

## 1 Brown

The first step is to brown (or sear) the meat or poultry. This adds an appetizing rich color to the dish and boosts the flavor. Here's how:

1. Pat dry the surface of the meat (or poultry) before searing
2. Heat a bit of fat (oil or animal fat) in the braising pot over medium-high
3. Season the meat or poultry, and brown in batches, turning to brown all sides
4. Never crowd the pan when browning

## 2 Add Liquid

After browning, set the meat or poultry aside and add one or more flavorful liquids, scraping the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon to dissolve any caramelized bits. Good choices are:

- Wine, unsweetened fruit juices, cider or beer
- Broth, such as beef or chicken

## 3 Add Aromatics

Add aromatics, seasoning and vegetables: Braising relies on building a depth of flavor through the inclusion of aromatic vegetables and other seasonings. Choose according to your taste and what's in season. Good choices are:

- Onions, celery and leeks
- Hearty root vegetables, such as carrots, potatoes, turnips and rutabagas
- Garlic, ginger, shallots and lemongrass
- Salt, pepper, bay leaf, cinnamon sticks, whole cloves and citrus zest
- Bits of cured ham, sausage or dried mushrooms

## 4 Cover & Braise

Return the meat or poultry to the pot, tucking it in with the vegetables, and making sure that the liquid comes about 1/3 of the way up. Cover tightly and slide into a moderate oven (275° to 325°) or set over a low simmer, and let braise quietly until tender. Large cuts, such as pot roast and pork shoulder, will take about 2 hours. Smaller cuts like chicken highs and pork ribs take under an hour.

## Braised Lamb Shanks with Garlic & Herbs SERVES 6

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6 Lamb Shanks (¾ - 1 lb each)  
Kosher Salt and Freshly Ground Black Pepper  
2 tablespoons Vegetable or Olive Oil  
1 ½ cups Dry White Vermouth or Dry White Wine

2 Bay Leaves  
2 heads Garlic, separated into cloves  
⅓ cup chopped Fresh Herbs, preferably a mix of  
Mint, Parsley, Chervil and Chives

Heat the oven to 325°. Season the shanks with salt and pepper. Heat the oil over medium heat in a large Dutch oven or other heavy braising pot large enough to accommodate the lamb shanks in single or double layer. Brown the shanks 3 at a time, turning to brown all side. Set the browned shanks on a platter. When all the shanks are browned, pour off and discard the fat from the pan.

Return pan to medium-high heat and add the vermouth or wine. Bring to a boil and stir with a wooden spoon to dissolve the drippings. Return the shanks to the pan. Tuck the bay leaves in between the shanks and scatter over the garlic. Cover and slide into the lower third of the oven. Braise, turning the shanks every 45 minutes, until fork tender, 1½ to 2 hours.

Transfer the shanks to a platter and cover with foil to keep warm. Skim the fat from the braising liquid. Strain liquid through a fine-mesh sieve, pressing down on the garlic cloves so the pulp goes through but not the skins. Stir and salt to taste. Spoon the sauce over the shanks and sprinkle with chopped herbs and a little freshly ground pepper.

## Italian-Style Beef Pot Roast with Root Vegetables SERVES 6

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One 3-lb Boneless Beef Chuck Pot Roast, tied  
Kosher Salt and Freshly Ground Black Pepper  
2 tablespoons Vegetable or Olive Oil  
1 large Onion, coarsely chopped  
½ lb Carrots, cut into 1-inch pieces  
1 small Celeriac (about 1 lb), peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes  
½ lb Turnips, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes

3 Garlic Cloves, smashed  
1 heaping tablespoon Tomato Paste  
1 cup hearty Dry Red Wine, such as cabernet sauvignon, zinfandel or syrah  
1 ¾ cup Low Sodium Beef Broth  
2 sprigs each Fresh Sage and Parsley  
1 Bay Leaf  
½ teaspoons Black Peppercorns

Season the beef with salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven or other braising pot over medium heat. Add the roast, and brown it on all sides, 15 to 18 minutes total. Set aside. Pour off any excess fat, leaving behind the browned drippings.

Return the pot to medium-high heat and add the onion, carrots, celeriac, turnips and garlic. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Sauté, stirring often, until just starting to brown in spots, about 6 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste, and cook for another minute. Add wine, bring to a boil, and let reduce for about 2 minutes. Add beef broth, bring to a boil. Add sage, parsley, and peppercorns. Return the roast to the pot, cover and place the pot in the lower third of the oven and braise at a gentle simmer, turning the roast once halfway through braising, until fork-tender, about 2½ hours. Remove the pot from the oven. Remove the strings from the roast. Slice into ½-inch thick slices serve with plenty of vegetables and braising liquid.

## Chicken Thighs Braised with Shallots & Orange Zest SERVES 4

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8 bone-in Chicken Thighs and/or Drumsticks  
(or any combination for a total of 8 pieces)  
All-Purpose Flour for dredging  
Kosher Salt and Freshly Ground Black Pepper  
2 tablespoons Vegetable or Olive Oil  
½ cup (2-3) Shallots, sliced  
1 teaspoon Coriander Seed, lightly crushed

1 teaspoon Orange Zest, freshly grated  
Pinch Red Pepper Flakes  
2 tablespoons White Wine Vinegar  
½ cup fresh Orange Juice  
¾ cup Low Sodium Chicken Broth  
1 Bay Leaf

Pat dry the chicken, and season with salt and pepper. Dredge each piece in flour, shaking to get rid of the excess. Heat the oil in a large, lidded skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is shimmering, add the chicken pieces – if they do not all fit without crowding, do this in batches – and cook, flipping once, until nicely browned on both sides, about 4 minutes per side. Remove the chicken to a plate and set aside.

Add the shallots to the skillet, reduce the heat to medium, and stir in the coriander, orange zest, and red pepper flakes. Cook until the shallot begins to soften and color, 3 to 4 minutes. Pour in the vinegar, let boil and scrape the skillet to release any caramelized bits. Add the stock and orange juice. Return the chicken to the pan along with any accumulated juices. Add the bay leaf. Cover tightly, and reduce heat to a gentle simmer. Cook, turning the chicken pieces once after 15 minutes, until cooked through and tender, 30 to 35 minutes total. Remove from heat, season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

## Beer Braised Short Ribs SERVES 6

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4 to 5 lbs meaty Beef Short Ribs  
Kosher Salt and Freshly Ground Black Pepper  
3 tablespoons Vegetable or Olive Oil  
1 each: large Onion, Celery Stalk, Carrot,  
all coarsely chopped

2 large Garlic Cloves, smashed  
1¾ cups Hearty Beer, such as porter or stout  
1 cup Low Sodium Beef or Chicken Broth  
2 Rosemary Sprigs (or ½ teaspoon Dried Thyme)  
1 Bay Leaf

Heat the oven to 325°. Pat dry the short ribs, and season with salt and pepper. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large Dutch oven or other heavy lidded pot over medium heat. Brown the ribs in batches without crowding, turning, until nicely browned, about 4 minutes per side. Transfer to a platter, and brown remaining ribs.

Pour off and discard most of fat from the pot. Heat the remaining oil over medium heat. Add the onion, celery, carrot, and garlic, and sauté, stirring occasionally, until browned in spots, about 8 minutes. Add beer, bring to a boil, stirring to scrape up any browned bits. Boil until reduced by half, about 10 minutes. Add the rosemary and bay leaf. Pour in the broth, and boil for 3 minutes. Return the short ribs to the pot, along with any juices. Cover tightly, and transfer to the oven. Braise at a gentle simmer, turning ribs every 45 minutes, until fork-tender and the meat is pulling away from the bone, about 2½ hours.

Transfer the ribs to a serving dish. Cover loosely with foil. Strain the braising liquid into a wide saucepan, and skim off fat. Bring the liquid to a vigorous simmer over medium-high heat and cook until concentrated in flavor slightly reduced, about 8 minutes. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Spoon the sauce over and serve.



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