



Howard Hillman's Great Peasant Dishes of the world

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Osso Buco

Italy

It originated as a peasant dish. Today, it is a popular national specialty.

Pronunciation:

ohs'-soh boo'-koh

Part 1 Recipe

■ Ingredients

Servings: 4

- **Veal shanks**
4 pieces 6 centimeters
or 2 1/2 inches long
- **Flour**
30 milliliters or 2 tablespoons
- **Unsalted butter**
50 milliliters or 3 tablespoons
- **Olive oil**
15 milliliters or 1 tablespoon
- **Chopped white onions**
20 centiliters or 3/4 cup
- **Minced carrots**
6 centiliters or 1/4 cup
- **Chopped celery**
6 centiliters or 1/4 cup
- **Dry white wine**
12 centiliters or 1/2 cup
- **Unseasoned veal stock**
12 centiliters or 1/2 cup
- **Chopped peeled tomatoes**
12 centiliters or 1/2 cup
- **Bay leaf**
1 medium-sized
- **Rosemary**
5 milliliters or 1 teaspoon
- **Marjoram**
2 milliliters or 1/2 teaspoon
- **Salt**
2 milliliters or 1/2 teaspoon

- **Ground black pepper**
1 milliliter or 1/4 teaspoon
- **Grated lemon rind**
15 milliliters or 1 tablespoon
- **Finely minced garlic**
5 milliliters or 1 teaspoon
- **Chopped fresh parsley**
30 milliliters or 2 tablespoons

■ Steps

- 1** Bring the veal shanks to room temperature. Preheat oven to 150°C or 300°F.
- 2** Dredge the veal shanks lightly in the flour.
- 3** Heat the butter and olive oil in a wide-bottomed 5 to 6 liter (5 to 6 quart) casserole over moderate heat.
- 4** Brown the veal shanks on all sides in the casserole. Transfer the shanks to a warm plate and partially cover them with aluminum foil.
- 5** Reduce the heat to low and sauté the onions for 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the carrots and sauté for 2 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the celery and sauté for 30 seconds, stirring frequently.
- 6** Stir in the wine, stock, tomatoes, bay leaf, rosemary, marjoram, salt, and pepper. Raise the heat and bring the preparation to a simmer. Continue simmering it for 10 minutes.
- 7** Return the veal shanks to the casserole. Arrange them upright (ideally, the surface of the bone that contains the largest cross section of marrow should face upward). Spoon the

sauce over the shanks. Cover the pot, place it in the middle of the oven, and cook the preparation for 1 1/2 to 2 hours, depending on the thickness of the veal flesh.

8 Mix the lemon rind, garlic, and parsley. This mixture is called gremolata.

9 Transfer the cooked veal shanks to a warm serving platter. Spoon the sauce over the shanks. Sprinkle the preparation with the gremolata. Serve promptly.

Part 2 Cooking tips

■ Pointers

- **Shank length** - For best results, the shank bones should be at least 5 centimeters (2 inches) but preferably 6 centimeters (2 1/2 inches) in length.
- **Veal** - For the sake of tenderness, be sure to buy veal not baby beef shanks. The color of veal shanks is pale white rather than rosy red.
- **Stock** - If you don't have veal stock, substitute chicken stock.
- **Tomatoes** - Unless they are vine ripened, use a good brand of canned imported Italian tomatoes. Drain the liquid.
- **Lemon rind** - When grating the lemon rind, do not cut too deeply into the bitter white pith that underlies the yellow skin.

■ Serving suggestions

- **Accompaniments** - The traditional starch accompaniment to osso buco is rice, especially risotto alla milanese. Pasta tossed with butter and freshly grated black pepper is a popular alternative.
- **Marrow** - If you don't have marrow spoons, substitute lobster forks for removing and eating the cooked bone marrow.
- **Beverage** - Serve a dry, medium-bodied Italian red wine.

alla milanese (Milan's version of Wiener schnitzel), risotto alla milanese (saffron-flavored rice), and minestrone soup.

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Part 3
Travelog

It was the season in the Lombardy region of Italy when brief, bright days and long, lazy nights disrupt the normal flow of daily farm activities. The extra evening hours allowed my host, his wife, and me to linger peacefully at the massive farmhouse table, savoring each bite of osso buco.

Osso buco ("hollowed bone") is veal shank braised with onions, wine, and tomatoes and garnished with a piquant mixture of lemon rind, garlic, and parsley. The jewel of this preparation is the bone marrow, which is traditionally extracted with a tiny silver spoon made especially for this gastronomic task. I've heard Italians fancifully call this implement the agente Belle fosse, "tax collector."

Osso buco is also known in the plural form, ossi buchi. By either name, just the thought of this dish is sufficient to set my gastric juices in motion.

Other Lombardian specialties include vitello tonnato (simmered boneless leg of veal served cold with a tuna-mayonnaise sauce), costoletta