

## THE NEVER-ENDING-CHICAGO-WINTER BEEF STEW

SERVES 8

I often donate a night of cooking to different charity auctions, so the winner gets a private dinner for a group of friends in their own home and the charity gets a nice donation. For one of these dinners just at the tail-end of a Chicago winter, I took some Allen Brothers beef, turned it into a nice warming stew, and then served it in a small portion topped with a dollop of sour cream as one of the courses. It's really simple, yet really flavorful, and a great way to use up various cuts of beef like chuck and short rib, which are both too tough to eat grilled or broiled. Those cuts of meat are filled with flavor that's best when cooked low and slow. You can eat this as a stew, over pasta, or even as a chunky sauce underneath your favorite fish as a comforting take on surf and turf. It holds up well in the refrigerator for about a week (actually the flavor is even better after a couple of days) and it will keep in the freezer for about one month.

3 tablespoons vegetable or canola oil

3 pounds beef, cubed

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 small onion, finely diced

3 garlic cloves, minced

1 pineapple, finely diced (see Quick Tip, page 92)

1 apple, peeled and diced

1 pear, peeled and diced

½ cup red wine

1 quart chicken broth

2 cups apple cider

One 16-ounce can diced tomatoes, such as San Marzanos (see Ingredient Spotlight, page 93)

¾ cup fish sauce

¾ cup Worcestershire sauce

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon sambal paste (see Ingredient Spotlight, page 47)

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1. Heat 1 tablespoon of the vegetable oil over high heat in a large soup pot. Season half of the beef with salt and pepper and add it to the pot. Brown the beef and remove. Repeat with the rest of the meat, removing and setting it aside.

2. Add another 1 tablespoon vegetable oil to the soup pot and lower the heat to medium. Add the onion and garlic and sweat them by cooking until the onion is translucent, about 3 minutes. Add the pineapple, apple, pear, and wine and simmer to reduce the liquid by half. Add back the beef along with the broth, cider,

tomatoes, fish sauce, Worcestershire sauce, vinegar, mustard, and sambal and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer. Taste and adjust the salt and pepper. Cover and simmer until the beef cubes fall apart easily when poked with a fork, a little over 4 hours. Adjust the seasoning before serving.



## QUICK TIP

Adding pineapple to braised dishes actually helps tenderize the meat. I learned this the hard way one day at Scylla when I was using gelatin and pineapple juice to make a gelée, but the juice never set. I added more and more gelatin with no luck. Finally, my pastry chef reminded me that pineapple, along with other fruits such as papayas and figs, contains certain enzymes that break down connective tissues in meat, and since gelatin is essentially made from those connective tissues, natural pineapple gelée just won't work. The thing I took away from this, though, is that those enzymes are perfect for tenderizing, especially when you're going to be braising the meat low and slow as you do for this stew recipe. This trick works just as well on chicken and pork as it does for beef.



### DRINK TIP

Porter beer, the father of stouts, is a no-brainer go-to for beefy stews and chili. There's enough rich maltiness to stand up to these wintry foods but also a good dose of citrusy hops, so you won't fall into a coma before halftime.