Cornish Pasties (pronounced "PAH-stee" - "pah" as in pasta noodles)



By tradition, the pastry for these is filled simply with raw bits of beef, chopped onions and "flaked" potatoes (called "tetties" in Cornwall). The raw beef in the traditional recipe cooks slowly inside the pastry shell with the vegetables and makes a nice gravy all by itself. But I prefer pre-cooking the meat and other ingredients before filling and baking the pastry shells, as in this easy recipe.

Ingredients:

1 pound "chipped" skirt steak (finely sliced against the grain, then chopped - you may substitute 1 pound of ground beef for the skirt steak, if you want to keep things simple)

1 medium onion, finely diced

1, 15-ounce can new potatoes, very thinly sliced

2 teaspoons "beef tea" (beef bouillon) or regular HP sauce

Diced turnips or rutabaga (not optional) & carrots (optional), about 5 ounces of each

2 tablespoons catsup/ketchup ("sauce" as the Brits say – see recipe that follows)

½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon ground, black pepper

4 ready-made 9" piecrusts (see notes below)

1 egg, beaten

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 350° F. Season the meat well with salt and pepper (I also like to give it a good dusting of garlic powder). Have your butcher slice the skirt steak for you, then chop it yourself at home.

In a large skillet, sear/brown the meat on medium-high heat - skirt steak is pretty fatty, so you don't have to heat any oil in the pan first.

Next, add the onions, turnip or rutabaga (and carrots, if you choose to include carrots); cook them with the meat on low heat a few minutes, just until the onion is soft and translucent. Add all the other ingredients to the pan (except the dough, of course) and heat it all through. Turn off the heat and let the mixture rest while you prepare the pastry dough.

Roll out the dough and cut out four 8" rounds (I use a bowl with an 8" rim as a stencil - you can save the pie-dough scraps and freeze them for use later).

Spoon a quarter of the meat mixture onto one half of each pie circle, moisten the edges with a little water, fold in half and crimp the edges.

Make an egg wash using one part water to three parts beaten egg and brush some on top of each pasty; then cut three or four slits in the top to vent.

Bake on a cookie sheet for 25 - 30 minutes, or until golden brown. Makes four pasties (the recipe can be halved by simply reducing all the ingredient quantities by 50%).

Notes:

This ancient meal from the southwest-most reaches of England is normally eaten alone. The thick side-crust edge served in the olden days as a means by which the pasty could be held onto while eating; the tin miners from days gone by would eat up the plump, semi-round main body of the pasty and throw the thick crust "handle" away afterwards that would surely have been poisoned by the toxic metals on their hands from the day's work in the mines. I used to make these with crescent-roll pastry dough (as in my recipe for Welsh pasties), and they taste wonderful that way. However, using the more traditional, semi-circle pie pastry is much more authentic.