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LAYERED CASSEROLE WITH BEEF, CABBAGE AND POTATO

Socca

SERVES 8 OR MORE

NOTES

Make this dish once and you will make it over and over. Everything about it is good. It requires only one big pan, and that one will contain a complete supper of meat, potatoes, and vegetable for at least eight and likely a dozen people.

Best of all, everybody loves every bit that comes out of the pan. Socca, as this is called in Valle d'Aosta, is exactly what the English recipe name says: a big casserole with layers of sliced beef, sliced potatoes, and shredded cabbage (all nicely seasoned). It bakes for several hours, until all the layers are fork-tender, then it's covered with a final layer of fontina, which bakes into an irresistibly crusty cheese topping. (Though it is unlikely you will have much left over, the dish will keep in well for several days in the

DIRECTIONS



You will need a food processor; a large baking dish or roasting pan, 5-quart capacity, 10 by 15 inches or larger.

Arrange a rack in the middle of the oven, and heat to 375°. Using a food processor, mince the sage, rosemary, garlic, ¼ cup of the olive oil, and ½ teaspoon of the salt into a fine-textured pestata.

Put the potato slices in a large bowl; sprinkle on top 1 teaspoon salt, 2 tablespoons olive oil, and 1 tablespoon of the pestata. Toss well to coat the slices with the seasonings.

refrigerator; reheat it either on top of the stove or in the oven.)

In Valle d'Aosta, the meat of choice in socca is beef or game; in my recipe, it's a top-blade roast from the beef chuck (or shoulder). Since I am sure you will make this again, I suggest you try it with slices of pork shoulder (the butt roast) or lamb shoulder or lamb leg. These meats will be delicious in the casserole, too.

INGREDIENTS

- ABOUT A DOZEN LARGE FRESH SAGE LEAVES
- ¼ CUP FRESH ROSEMARY LEAVES, STRIPPED FROM THE BRANCH
- 8 PLUMP GARLIC CLOVES, PEELED
- ⅔ CUP EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
- 1½ TABLESPOONS KOSHER SALT
- 2 POUNDS RED POTATOES, SLICED ½ INCH THICK
- A 4-POUND BONELESS BEEF SHOULDER ROAST (PREFERABLY A "TOP BLADE" OR "TOP CHUCK SHOULDER" ROAST)
- 1 STICK (8 TABLESPOONS) SOFT BUTTER
- 1 HEAD SAVOY CABBAGE, ABOUT 2½ POUNDS, CORED AND SLICED INTO ½-INCH SHREDS
- 2 CUPS WHITE WINE
- 1 POUND SHREDDED FONTINA FROM VALLE D'AOSTA (OR ITALIAN FONTAL)

With a sharp knife, slice the beef across the grain into ¾-inch-thick slices—if using a top-blade roast, slice it crosswise. As you did with the potatoes, put the meat slices in a bowl and toss them with seasonings until well coated, using 1 teaspoon salt, 2 tablespoons olive oil, and 2 tablespoons of the pestata.

Brush the roasting pan with the remaining olive oil and 2 tablespoons of the butter. Arrange half of the potato slices in a single layer on the pan bottom, spread half the cabbage shreds evenly over the potatoes, and season with 1 teaspoon salt. Distribute all the beef slices, in a single layer, over the cabbage. (The pan should be about half full: press down on the beef if it looks like you need more room for the rest of the vegetables.)

Dot the top of the beef with small mounds of butter, using another tablespoons in all. Lay the remaining potato slices on top of the beef slices, spread the rest of the cabbage evenly over the slices, and season with the remaining teaspoon salt. Stir all of the remaining pestata into the white wine, and pour the wine all over the cabbage shreds. Finally, dot the top with the rest of the butter.

Tent the baking dish with a sheet of aluminum foil, arching it above the food and pressing it against the sides of the pan. Set the dish in the oven, and bake about 2½ hours, until the meat and vegetables are all very tender and almost all of the liquid has been absorbed.

Remove the foil, and sprinkle the shredded fontina over the top of the potatoes and cabbage (which will have sunk down in the pan). Bake another 15 to 20 minutes, until the fontina has melted, bubbled, and browned into a crusty topping.

Let the casserole rest for 10 minutes. Set the roasting pan on a trivet at the table, and serve family-style, spooned onto dinner plates.