

osso bucco slow cooker recipe

Osso bucco slow cooker recipe is a delightful way to enjoy this traditional Italian dish without the fuss of constant monitoring. Osso bucco, which translates to “bone with a hole,” typically refers to cross-cut veal shanks that are braised with vegetables, broth, and wine. The slow cooker simplifies the cooking process, allowing the meat to become tender and flavorful while you focus on other tasks. This article will guide you through the history of osso bucco, the ingredients needed for a slow cooker version, preparation steps, cooking tips, and serving suggestions.

The History of Osso Bucco

Osso bucco has its roots in the northern Italian region of Lombardy, particularly in the city of Milan. Traditionally made with veal shanks, this dish has been a staple in Italian cuisine for centuries. The marrow found in the bone adds richness to the dish, elevating its flavor profile.

Originally, osso bucco was a peasant dish, using less expensive cuts of meat that required long cooking times to become tender. Over time, it gained popularity and has now become a gourmet dish served in fine dining establishments around the globe. The slow cooker adaptation allows home cooks to enjoy this classic without the need for extensive preparation and monitoring.

Ingredients for Osso Bucco in a Slow Cooker

To create a delicious osso bucco slow cooker recipe, gather the following ingredients:

Meat and Bones

- 4 veal shanks (approximately 1.5 inches thick)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Vegetables

- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 celery stalks, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup diced tomatoes (canned or fresh)

Liquids and Seasonings

- 1 cup dry white wine (such as Pinot Grigio)
- 1 cup beef or chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- Zest of 1 lemon (optional)

Garnish

- Fresh parsley, chopped (for gremolata)
- Lemon wedges (for serving)

Preparation Steps

Creating osso bucco in a slow cooker is a straightforward process. Follow these steps to ensure a flavorful and tender result:

1. Prepare the Meat

- Begin by seasoning the veal shanks generously with salt and pepper.
- In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat.
- Sear the veal shanks on all sides until they are nicely browned, about 3-4 minutes per side. This step adds depth to the flavor of the dish.

2. Sauté the Vegetables

- In the same skillet, add the chopped onion, carrots, and celery. Sauté for about 5 minutes until the vegetables begin to soften.
- Stir in the minced garlic and cook for an additional minute until fragrant.
- Add the diced tomatoes and tomato paste, mixing everything well.

3. Assemble in the Slow Cooker

- Transfer the seared veal shanks to the slow cooker.
- Pour the sautéed vegetable mixture over the meat.
- Add the white wine, broth, oregano, thyme, and bay leaves. Ensure the liquid covers the meat and vegetables.
- If using, sprinkle lemon zest over the top.

4. Cooking Time

- Cover the slow cooker and set it on low for 6-8 hours or high for 4-5 hours. The longer cooking time on low will yield more tender meat.
- Check for doneness; the meat should be falling off the bone when it is ready.

Cooking Tips for the Best Osso Bucco

To ensure your osso bucco comes out perfectly every time, consider the following tips:

- Quality Meat: Choose high-quality veal shanks with a good amount of marrow in the bones for the best flavor.
- Searing: Don't skip the searing step; it caramelizes the meat and adds complexity to the dish.
- Liquid Level: Make sure there's enough liquid in the slow cooker to keep the meat moist. If necessary, add more broth or wine during cooking.
- Don't Rush: Allow the osso bucco to cook low and slow. This process breaks down the connective tissue and results in tender meat.
- Gremolata: Traditional osso bucco is served with gremolata, a mixture of lemon zest, garlic, and parsley. This garnish adds a bright, fresh flavor that complements the richness of the dish.

Serving Suggestions

Once your osso bucco is ready, it's time to serve it up. Here are some great ideas on how to enjoy this dish:

1. Pair with Sides

- Creamy polenta: The soft texture and subtle flavor of polenta complement the richness of osso bucco.
- Risotto: A classic Italian pairing, risotto absorbs the flavorful juices from the meat.
- Garlic mashed potatoes: For a comforting side, serve with buttery mashed potatoes.

2. Add Gremolata

- Before serving, sprinkle freshly chopped parsley mixed with lemon zest and minced garlic over the osso bucco. This adds brightness to the dish.

3. Wine Pairing

- A medium-bodied red wine, such as Chianti or Barolo, pairs beautifully with the flavors of osso bucco. If you prefer white, a fuller-bodied option like Chardonnay will work well.

4. Leftovers

- Osso bucco makes excellent leftovers. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. The flavors will deepen as it sits.
- Reheat gently on the stovetop or in the microwave, adding a splash of broth if needed.

Conclusion

The osso bucco slow cooker recipe is a wonderful way to enjoy a classic Italian dish with minimal effort. The slow cooking method ensures tender, flavorful meat that will impress your family and friends. Whether you serve it over creamy polenta, with a side of garlic mashed potatoes, or simply with a fresh salad, osso bucco is sure to become a favorite in your household. With this guide, you can create a comforting meal that brings the taste of Italy right to your dining table. Enjoy the process and the delicious results!

Frequently Asked Questions

What is osso bucco?

Osso bucco is a traditional Italian dish made with braised veal shanks, typically cooked with vegetables, white wine, and broth, served with gremolata.

Can I use a slow cooker for osso bucco?

Yes, a slow cooker is ideal for making osso bucco as it allows the meat to become tender and flavorful over several hours of cooking.

What ingredients do I need for a slow cooker osso bucco recipe?

You will need veal shanks, onion, carrot, celery, garlic, tomatoes, white wine, broth, and herbs like thyme and bay leaves.

How long should I cook osso bucco in a slow cooker?

Cook osso bucco on low for 6 to 8 hours or on high for 4 to 6 hours, until the meat is tender and falls off the bone.

Can I substitute veal with another type of meat?

Yes, you can substitute veal with pork or lamb shanks, but the flavor and texture will vary slightly.

What is gremolata and how do I make it?

Gremolata is a condiment made from lemon zest, garlic, and parsley, and it adds freshness to the rich flavors of osso bucco. Simply mix these ingredients together just before serving.

Can I freeze leftover osso bucco?

Yes, you can freeze leftover osso bucco in an airtight container for up to 3 months. Thaw it in the refrigerator before reheating.

What side dishes pair well with osso bucco?

Ossobucco pairs well with creamy polenta, risotto, mashed potatoes, or crusty bread to soak up the sauce.

How can I thicken the sauce in my slow cooker osso bucco?

To thicken the sauce, you can remove the lid during the last hour of cooking to let it reduce, or mix a slurry of cornstarch and water and stir it in during the last 30 minutes.

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