
Real Ale Pie

The basic recipe can be altered to suit individual needs. If small individual pies are your choice, then use short crust pastry. Because of the extra pastry, the filling should be enough for 8-10 portions. If, however, a larger, single pie is to be cooked, then for ease use puff pastry. Depending on the cook's generosity, 6-8 portions can be expected. The choice of ales is personal, based on the experience I have gained through cooking this dish over a two-year period, at least once a week. The two ale method gives best results, however it is more time-consuming, and using only Old Peculier the result is still highly rich and satisfying.

Ingredients

- 3 lb braising steak*
- 3 lamb's kidneys or 1 pig's kidney (optional)*
- 2 medium onions, finely chopped*
- 2 oz flour*
- 1 ½ pints Theakston Old Peculier or 1 pint Taylor's Landlord and ½ pint Old Peculier*
- 3 tablespoons mild paprika*
- 6 cloves*
- 2 teaspoons tomato puree*
- 6 medium or 4 large bayleaves*
- 2 teaspoons ground black pepper*
- 2 cloves garlic*
- 1 dessert spoon salt*
- 6-10 dashes Worcestershire Sauce (optional)*
- 1 cup gravy made with one dessert spoon granules or powder (Oxo original works well)*
- Short crust or puff pastry (home-made or frozen)*

Method

1. Dice and trim the braising steak into 1-inch cubes. If using kidney, cut into ¼ inch pieces (and be sure to remove the white core).
2. Peel and slice the garlic; spread the salt on a chopping board and chop the garlic in the salt; finally, crush the chopped garlic into the salt using the base of a knife.
3. If using the two-beer method, transfer rapidly between two vessels to de-gas it. Then place the meat in the beer and leave for 10 minutes (if you are making your own pastry, this could be a good time to do so).

4. Take a large pan (preferably a flame proof casserole) and gently heat enough oil to cover the bottom to a depth of 1/8 inch; add the onions and fry gently until golden.
5. Drain the meat from the ale (keeping the beer for later) then, increasing the heat, add the meat to the pan and fry, stirring all the time, until the meat is sealed. About 2-3 minutes.
6. Stir in the paprika, black pepper, cloves and bay leaf.
7. Add the flour, stirring continuously, until the meat is covered and keep frying until the flour is brown
8. Mix in the tomato puree, garlic and Worcestershire sauce.
9. Add _____ made-up gravy and stir well in.
10. Then gradually add one pint of ale until a sauce the consistency of single cream is achieved. Dilute with water if it is too thick.
11. Simmer until just bubbling, stirring all the time.
12. If using a flame proof casserole this can then be placed straight in the oven, otherwise transfer the mixture to a pre-heated oven dish. Cook at gas mark 5, 175F for 2½ hours, stirring every 45 minutes, adding a little of the remaining ½ pint of ale each time.
13. Roll out the pastry. If making individual pies, line the pie dishes and bake blind for 10-12 minutes at gas 7, 425F. Then leave to cool for 20 minutes. Then fill with meat and sauce, cover with pastry cap, brush with egg wash (that's one egg whisked with a little milk) and return to oven for a further 15 minutes or until golden.
14. If making a larger pie, add the filling to the pie dish, cover with pastry top and bake at gas 7, 425F for 10 minutes. Remove from the oven, brush with egg wash and return to the oven for a further 7-10 minutes, or until golden.

Serving suggestions

Served with boiled potatoes and green beans.

Suggested beer accompaniment

A good best bitter makes an ideal accompaniment to this. Taylor's Landlord, Adnams Broadside or something similar can be recommended.

Serving Suggestion - Beer Gravy

Make up a standard gravy mix, but leave the water content at the standard. Thin down with pale ale or stout.