

Pork and Cider Hotpot

This began life as a very basic but quite effective recipe by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall from *Waitrose Food Illustrated*. It is still a basic recipe but has a few personal modifications. Firstly, good ol' Hugh wasted the tasty browning bits from the pork by cooking it in a separate pan but who would want to do that? Secondly, I find the addition of lashings of celery combines well and adds umami, not to mention a veggie unit.

Planning

serves:	2
prep time:	10 mins
cooking time:	2½ hrs

Ingredients

500g pork belly, skinned & cubed (2cm)
1 large onion, peeled & chopped
½ head celery, very finely sliced
1 tbs plain flour
1 tsp thyme leaves
1 bay leaf
500ml dry cider
1½ tsp mustard
salt & pepper

Method

Preheat the oven to 150°C/gas 2.

Begin by browning the pork cubes in a couple of tablespoons of olive oil over medium-high heat. You will probably need to do this in two batches to avoid overcrowding the meat. Remove the pork and set aside.

Add the onions and celery to the pan, lower the heat a little and gently cook the vegetables, stirring frequently, until soft but not brown (about 15 mins). Sprinkle in, say, 1 tablespoon flour for thickening and stir well. Return the pork to the pan, together with any accumulated juices and stir well again. Finally add the thyme, bay leaf and enough cider to just cover the meat and veggies. Bring to a simmer before covering the casserole and transferring it to the oven. Cook it for 2 hours.

Taste the juices, stir in the mustard and season to taste. Serve with mashed potato to soak up the juices.