

Rabo de Toro con Rioja

The Spanish have got a bit of a bull fixation so perhaps it's not surprising that *Rabo de Toro* [oxtail] is very popular there. Buying oxtail here seems to require a stroke of luck being in the right place at the right time. One day recently I saw a wonderful looking tray of the stuff in our local butchers. I salivated but didn't buy it because Carol claimed not to like it. The following day I returned but the oxtail had all gone - every scrap. I kicked myself. Still, as my mother so succinctly put it, "there's only one tail on any ox."

I've enjoyed oxtail in Spain prepared in what was supposedly a chocolate-containing sauce, though I couldn't actually discern any chocolate. Being a seasoning, that's probably quite right, though. Keen to try it at home myself and having finally tracked down some oxtail, this is the recipe I found in *Casa Moro*, and very good it was, too. This converted Carol, whose dislike had been based upon childhood memories of canned oxtail soup.

Don't be put off by the rather daunting looking list of ingredients. They are split into two parts because it was recommended to cook this over a 2-day period.

Planning

serves:	4
prep time:	20 mins
cooking time:	3 hrs (over 2 days)

Ingredients

DAY 1:

3 tbs olive oil
1.5 kgs oxtail, in 5cm/2in chunks
1 carrot, chunked
1 onion, chunked
1 rib celery, chunked
10 black peppercorns
2 bay leaves
4 sprigs fresh thyme
4 cloves
3 cloves garlic, peeled & quartered
1 bottle red Rioja
stalks from a bunch of fresh parsley

DAY 2:

2 tbs olive oil
1 onion, finely diced
1 carrot, finely diced
120g chorizo, halved lengthways and cut to 1cm

Method

On DAY 1, select a heavy pan with a lid that will ideally take either a complete single layer of oxtail or two complete layers. Complete layers help to keep the oxtail submerged when it comes to the casseroiling. Once you've got your pan, heat the oil in it over medium high heat. Season the oxtail with salt and pepper and brown on all sides. You'll need to do this in batches.

Remove the oxtail from the pan and pour off any excess fat prior to adding the onion, carrot and celery. Fry the vegetables for 5 minutes until beginning to colour. Add the peppercorns, bay leaves, thyme sprigs, cloves and garlic, and fry for 2 more minutes. Pour in the Rioja with the parsley stalks and boil off the alcohol. Return the oxtail to the pan and top up with fresh water to cover everything. Bring back to a very gentle simmer, reduce the heat to low and cook for about 2 hours. (I covered it mostly with the lid, leaving a crack to let some steam out and stop it cooking too fast.) The meat should be able to be pulled from the bone but not be falling off by itself.

Transfer the oxtail to a bowl or other suitable container and strain the cooking juices over through a sieve. Leave it to cool and keep it overnight in the fridge.

Begin DAY 2 by removing as much solidified fat as possible from the surface of the chilled oxtail and juices. Heat the olive oil over medium high heat in your selected pan again and, when hot, toss in the onion and carrot. Cook the vegetables for about 10 minutes until they begin to caramelize, stirring occasionally. Add the chorizo pieces and cook for 5 minutes more. Now stir in the flour and cook for another 2 minutes before also stirring in both paprikas, the fennel and tomato purée. Return the oxtail and stock to the

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2 tbs plain flour
1 tsp sweet paprika
¼ tsp hot paprika
½ tsp fennel seeds, ground
 in a pestle & mortar
2 tbs tomato purée
Salt & pepper

pan and bring to a simmer. Adjust the seasoning and cook, almost covered, for 30 minutes.

The Spanish seem to like fried potatoes with this but mashed potatoes works very well with all that juice. A green vegetable would be healthy, too.