

A Recipe from KNOPF

ANTICO PEPOSO

Beef Braised with Black Peppercorns



credit: Paolo DeStefano

Antico peposo, a very old recipe for cubed beef, is cooked with lots of pepper and no other condiment—not even a drop of oil or any other fat—and it becomes a delightfully savory and peppery dish. The dish probably dates back to medieval times, when there was no refrigeration and meat was preserved with salt or lots of pepper and herbs. Once the meat was embedded with the pepper, it was cooked just as it was. Or with a little wine and garlic.

My *peposo* uses only a fraction of the amount of black peppercorns that are in traditional recipes, but it will still please even the most fanatic pepper-lover: this is peppery!

To balance the spiciness of the meat and mop up the sauce, you need some starch. I like to serve the *peposo* with one of the following: polenta, boiled or mashed potatoes, gnocchi, or just beans cooked with olive oil.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds beef chuck or round, trimmed, in 2-inch chunks
- 4 cups red wine
- 1 teaspoon coarse sea salt
- 2 to 4 tablespoons whole black peppercorns
- ½ cup garlic cloves, peeled

Put the meat chunks, wine, and salt in the heavy saucepan. Crack 2 tablespoons or more of peppercorns into coarse bits in a mortar or spice grinder, and dump them into the pan. Mince the garlic into fine bits, and scrape into the wine.

Bring the wine to a boil, cover the pan tightly, and reduce the heat to a steady simmer. Cook for 4 to 5 hours, until the meat is very tender and the wine has thickened and reduced to barely cover the meat chunks.

Serve hot.

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT

- A mortar and pestle or spice grinder
- A heavy-bottomed saucepan with a cover, such as an enameled cast-iron French oven, 5-quart capacity

Serves 6.

