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## RECIPE OF THE WEEK

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# Alex's Beef Carbonnade

This classic Belgian casserole is a lesson in kitchen economy and proof that the cheapest and toughest cuts make the most flavoursome dinners. Whilst having an AGA maybe ruled for most out on cost a Slo-Cooker costs the same as a lightbulb to run and will have dinner for a huge tableful of people ready when you get home from work or a day out and give you a welcoming perfume that says 'Home.' Carbonnade is at its best if cooked ahead, cooled and then refrigerated before being reheated.



*1 1/4kg shin or stewing beef, cut into 4cm cubes*  
*400ml Chimay or other dark ale like Dowbridge Brewery Praetorian Porter*  
*3 garlic cloves, lightly crushed*  
*2 bay leaves*  
*3 tbsp plain flour, seasoned with salt and pepper*  
*2-3 tbsp olive oil*  
*250g diced pancetta*  
*2 carrots, sliced*  
*2 onions, sliced*  
*1 leek, sliced*  
*1 tbsp tomato purée*

*350ml beef stock*  
*1 bouquet garni (a small bunch of thyme, parsley stalks, a bay leaf and about 6 peppercorns tied in muslin)*  
*a handful of parsley, chopped*

Marinate the beef overnight in the ale with the garlic and bay leaves. The next day, drain the beef from the marinade, reserving the marinade. Pat the meat dry with kitchen paper and toss it in the seasoned flour until evenly coated. Shake off any excess flour. Heat 2 tbsp of the olive oil in a large flameproof casserole until hot. Fry the beef in 3-4 batches for about 5 minutes per batch, stirring occasionally, until it is a rich golden brown all over. You may need to add a little more oil between batches but make sure it is hot again before adding the next batch. Remove the meat with a slotted spoon to a plate and set aside. Don't worry if the bottom of the casserole is starting to brown, this all adds to the flavour of the finished dish.

Lower the heat to medium and fry the pancetta in the casserole for 6-8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until crisp and golden. Scoop the pancetta out with a slotted spoon and set aside with the beef.

Preheat the oven to fan 140C/conventional 160C/gas 3. Tip the carrots, onions and leek into the casserole and fry, stirring occasionally, until they start to brown – this takes about 12 minutes. Spoon in the tomato purée and continue to cook for 2 minutes, stirring constantly.

Add the beef and pour in the reserved marinade. Bring to a simmer, scraping any sticky bits off the bottom of the pan, then add all the beef stock and bouquet garni to the casserole. Season with salt and pepper and bring everything to the boil. Remove from the heat. Cover with a lid and cook in the oven for 2 hours, stirring once halfway through. (The carbonnade may now be left to cool and frozen for up to 1 month. Add 100ml/3 1/2 fl oz more stock to the sauce when reheating.) When the beef is ready, taste for seasoning and add more salt and pepper if you think it needs it. Scatter the chopped parsley over the top and serve straight from the casserole, with creamy mash or jacket potatoes and buttered greens or cabbage.

*To download this recipe go to [www.squisito-deli.co.uk](http://www.squisito-deli.co.uk)*

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