

Slow-Cooked Beef Cheek and Mushroom Ragu

**Gather
& Feast**

By Ashley Alexander

Winter cooking at its best - a rich, hearty, collagen-rich ragu with slow-braised beef cheeks and a generous amount of swiss brown mushrooms, both diced and sliced for texture. The cheeks braise low and slow until unbelievably tender, creating the most luxurious, collagen-rich sauce, while the mushrooms add the perfect earthiness and body to the ragu. The red wine and a parmigiano rind deepen the flavour, leaving you with a sauce that's thick, glossy, and packed with flavour for a relatively minimal ingredient list. Serve it over your favourite pasta or some soft polenta, with plenty of freshly grated parmigiano reggiano, and a scattering of parsley or basil if you like.

SERVES 4-6 | **PREP** 20 minutes | **COOK** 4 hours 15 minutes | **TOTAL TIME** 4 hours 35 minutes

INGREDIENTS

Beef Cheek and Mushroom Ragu

- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1kg beef cheeks (roughly 3-4 cheeks), trimmed of any excess fat
- 1 large brown onion, peeled and finely diced
- 1 large carrot, peeled and finely diced
- 6 garlic cloves, finely crushed or grated
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves
- 550g swiss brown mushrooms, stalks trimmed, half finely diced and half thinly sliced (for texture in the sauce)
- 500ml red wine
- 800g tomato polpa

- 250ml beef stock
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 parmigiano reggiano rind (optional)
- Fine sea salt

To Serve

- 500g dried pasta (amount depends on how many you're feeding, see notes)
- Finely grated parmigiano reggiano
- A handful of fresh parsley or basil leaves, roughly torn (optional)

METHOD

1. **Sear the beef cheeks:** Pat the 1kg beef cheeks dry and season generously with salt. Heat 2 tablespoons of the extra virgin olive oil in a large heavy-based casserole dish or Dutch oven over high heat. Once hot, sear the beef cheeks until deeply browned on all sides. Remove and set aside in a bowl.

2. **Sauté the vegetables:** Reduce the heat to medium and add the remaining tablespoon of olive oil to the pot. Add the onion, carrot, garlic and thyme, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 4-5 minutes until softened and fragrant, scraping up any browned bits stuck to the base of the pot as you go.
3. **Add the mushrooms:** Stir in the 550g swiss brown mushrooms - both the finely diced and thinly sliced - and cook for a further 5 minutes, until they soften and begin to release their moisture.
4. **Build the braise:** Preheat the oven to 150°C/300°F. Pour in the 500ml red wine and simmer for 2-3 minutes. Add the 800g tomato polpa, 250ml beef stock, bay leaves and parmigiano rind (if using), then return the seared beef cheeks and any resting juices to the pot. Stir to combine and season with salt.
5. **Slow cook:** Bring the pot to a gentle simmer on the stovetop, then cover with a lid and transfer to the oven. Cook for 4 hours, until the beef cheeks are meltingly tender and pull apart easily with a fork.
6. **Rest and shred:** Remove the pot from the oven and discard the bay leaves and parmigiano rind. Allow to sit for 10-15 minutes, then shred the beef cheeks directly in the pot using two forks, stirring the meat back through the sauce. The collagen in the beef cheeks creates the most luxurious silky sauce.
7. **Reserve sauce and serve:** This sauce makes two meals, so if I'm not feeding a crowd, I like to put half in the fridge for another day (it will keep for 3 days) or in the freezer (it will keep for a few months). Once you've set aside your reserved sauce, cook the 500g pasta in salted boiling water for one minute less than the packet instructions. Using a large strainer spoon, scoop the pasta straight from the pasta water into the pot with the sauce, and stir over high heat to bring the pasta and sauce together, adding a little pasta water as needed until the sauce is smooth and silky and the pasta is al dente. Remove from the heat, add a generous handful of finely grated parmigiano reggiano, and toss to combine. Serve into bowls with plenty of freshly grated parmigiano reggiano, and a scattering of parsley or basil if you like, a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and lots of freshly cracked black pepper.

NOTES

Oven temperature: cook at 150°C/300°F for 4 hours. Beef cheeks are full of collagen and need the full low-and-slow cook to break down and turn meltingly tender - don't be tempted to rush it.

Parmigiano rind: this adds a deep, savoury backbone to the sauce. Keep offcuts of parmigiano rind in or pick some up at your local deli or specialty grocer and keep the offcuts in the freezer - the perfect little flavour boost for sauces and soups.

Make ahead: this ragu is even better the next day, once the flavours have had time to settle. It keeps well in the fridge for up to 3 days, or in the freezer for up to 3 months.

2 meals in 1: this sauce makes enough for 2 meals for 4-6 people. Pop half into the fridge for another day (it will keep for 3 days) or into the freezer (it will keep for a few months). If you're feeding a crowd, use all of the sauce with 750g-1kg dried pasta (you'll need a large pot to boil the pasta).

Lasagne: this ragu also makes the most delicious lasagne sauce - layer with lasagne sheets, bechamel, mozzarella and fresh basil.



Find the recipe and watch the video online:

<https://www.gatherandfeast.com/slow-cooked-beef-cheek-and-mushroom-ragu>

Let me know if you make the recipe! x **@gatherandfeast**