



awesome **osso
buco**

Our makeover gives this classically elegant veal shank dish casual flair and contemporary attitude

By Daniel Bendas
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the original

For our inspiration, we sought out one of the superstars of Italian cuisine, Lidia Bastianich, for her osso buco di vitello con risotto d'orzo (veal osso buco with barley risotto, pictured above). Winner of three James Beard Foundation awards, she menus variations at two of her New York restaurants, Felidia (\$24 lunch; \$27 dinner) and Becco, where she serves it with butternut squash and risotto (\$19 lunch; \$27 dinner), as well as her two satellite Lidia's locations in Kansas City, Mo., and Pittsburgh.

the analysis

This recipe is appealing because it is an elegant, classic Italian dish that makes dramatic use of veal. On the menu it commands a premium price. Unfortunately, it presents two main challenges for the large-volume operator: the braised veal shank and the risotto. Both are time and labor intensive. Our goal is to find acceptable ingredient and/or preparation substitutes that will allow midscale casual-dining operators to execute the dish without adding complexity or time to their kitchen line. Ideally, we'd also like to find creative ways to leverage their existing kitchen inventory.

the results

As we know, many chain restaurants do not have the capabilities or equipment to sear and braise veal shanks, yet they have a desire to offer products such as this. Our solution for both recipes was to use a pre-braised veal shank.

These are now available from several purveyors (see p. 32) and the quality is quite consistent.

Although buying the shank pre-cooked adds to the dish's food cost, the profit contribution per plate is worth the added expense because of the higher price operators can charge.

We also substituted mashed and sweet potatoes for the risotto because, whether fresh or processed, these items are already in many operators' repertoire and lend themselves to multiple flavor variations.

The ability to prepare all of the components in advance allows for a more consistent product at the time of service and shortens the cook time required, allowing operators to meet acceptable ticket-time standards. Additionally, the final preparation affords the option to prepare the dish to order or heat and hold multiple orders, depending on volume.

Finally, the veal shank plays on the popularity of comfort foods, but both variations add contemporary and ethnic twists, bringing together recognizable flavors and ingredients that will not intimidate most casual restaurant guests.

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Veal shank braised in Cabernet demi with caramelized vegetable and woodland mushroom ragout

FOR THE VEAL SHANKS:

Yield: 4 servings

Braised veal shanks, about 1 lb each, fully prepared as purchased 4 each

Cabernet demi 2 C, plus 3 to 4 oz

Vegetable mushroom ragout 4 oz

Garlic mashed potatoes 6 to 8 oz

1. Place the veal shanks and 2 cups Cabernet demi into a suitable sized braising pan. Heat the sauce to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover the pan tightly with a lid or aluminum foil, then place in a 375 degree F to 400 degree F oven until the veal shanks are thoroughly heated, about 8 to 9 minutes.

2. Heat a small sauté skillet over high heat. Add about 4 ounces of the vegetable mushroom ragout and toss to quickly heat. Let cool; reserve.

3. To serve: Mound about 6 to 8 ounces of garlic mashed potatoes on one side of a service plate. Ladle 3 to 4 ounces of the Cabernet demi onto the plate, in front of the potatoes. Set 1 veal shank over the sauce, standing and resting on the mashed potatoes. Spoon the cooled ragout on the plate, in front of the standing veal shank. Serve immediately.

Serving suggestion: Accompany with 4 to 5 ounces of grilled baby broccoli or broccolini and top shank with 1/4 ounce of crisp-fried leeks.

FOR THE CABERNET DEMI

Yield: 2 1/2 C

Butter 1 oz

Shallots, finely minced 1/4 C

Garlic, chopped 2 Tbs

Cabernet Sauvignon 1 1/2 C

Demi-glace 2 C

Glacé de veau 1 oz

Black pepper, medium grind 1/2 tsp

Salt to taste

1. In a saucepan, melt and heat butter, without browning, over medium heat. Add shallots and cook, stirring frequently, until lightly browned, about 4 to 5 minutes.

2. Add garlic, blend with the shallots, and continue cooking an additional 2 minutes. Add the Cabernet, blend all ingredients, and bring to a boil. Reduce the wine by one-half, stirring occasionally.

3. Add the demi-glace, glacé de veau and pepper, blending all ingredients. Return to a boil, then reduce heat to simmering. Simmer for an additional 5 minutes. Salt to taste. Reserve.

Note: Sauce can be prepared in advance and refrigerated until needed.

FOR THE CARAMELIZED VEGETABLE AND WOODLAND MUSHROOM RAGOUT

Yield: 1 lb

Butter 2 oz

Frozen baby pearl onions, thawed, well drained 4 oz

Carrots, cut 1/4 in x 1/4 in x 1 in long, blanched 4 oz

Celery, trimmed, cut 1/4 in x 1/4 in x 1 in long 4 oz

Shallots, finely minced 1 Tbs

Garlic, chopped 1 1/2 tsp

Shiitake mushrooms, stem ends removed, quartered or cut into 1/6ths depending on size 2 oz

Cremini mushrooms, stem ends removed, quartered or cut into 1/6ths depending on size 2 oz

Portobello mushroom caps, cut 1/4 in x 1/4 in x 1 in long 2 oz

White mushrooms, medium, stem ends removed, quartered or cut into 1/6ths depending on size 2 oz

Glacé de veau 1 oz

Black pepper, medium grind 1/4 tsp

Salt 1/4 tsp

1. In a sauté pan, melt and heat 1 ounce of butter over medium-high heat. Do not brown. Add pearl onions, carrots and celery, and toss with the butter. Sauté the vegetables until evenly lightly browned and the celery is completely cooked, about 6 minutes.

2. Add shallots, garlic and additional 1 ounce of butter, blend with the vegetables, and continue cooking an additional 2 minutes, being careful not to brown the garlic.

3. Add all mushrooms and cook, tossing frequently, until the mushrooms are cooked, but still firm, about 4 to 5 minutes.

4. Add glacé de veau, pepper and salt, blending all ingredients and evenly glazing vegetables with glacé. Remove from the heat, spread the ragout on a tray and chill completely. Reserve.

Menu price: \$17.95;
food cost/serving: 37% to 38%

* The use of a caramelized vegetable and woodland mushroom ragout plays well to the popularity of mushrooms. The blend of white and some exotic varieties allows operators to "romance" the offering.

* Using a pre-braised veal shank removes complexity, yet allows the operator to serve a popular dish that can be customized to guests' tastes.

* This variation echoes the continued comfort food trend, but our recipe adds a bit of a contemporary twist and brings together recognizable flavors and ingredients that will not intimidate most casual-theme restaurant guests.



* Mashed potatoes help prop the veal shank to add drama and vertical "lift," and also can be seasoned multiple ways to accentuate the dish's flavor profile.

* The use of wine (as well as spirits) remains appealing to diners today. The Cabernet demi adds flair to a more traditional product offering.

Caribbean braised veal shanks with rum demi, shagadelic mango relish and hot cha cha yams

FOR THE VEAL

Yield: 8 servings

Braised veal shanks, 1 lb each, fully prepared as purchased	8 each
Rum demi	1 qt, plus 4 oz
Vegetable mixture	5 oz
Hot cha cha yams	8 to 10 oz
Shagadelic mango relish	2 to 3 oz

1. Place the veal shanks and 1 quart rum demi into a suitable sized braising pan. Heat the sauce to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover the pan tightly with a lid or aluminum foil, then place into a 375 degree F to 400 degree F oven until the veal shanks are thoroughly heated, about 10 to 12 minutes.

2. Heat a sauté skillet over high heat. Sauté about 5 ounces of the vegetable mixture and toss to quickly heat. Reserve.

3. To serve: Mound about 8 to 10 ounces of the yams on one side of the service plate. Set 1 veal shank in front of the yams on a 45 degree angle. Ladle 4 ounces of the rum demi onto the plate, in front of the veal shank. Spoon 4 to 5 ounces of the vegetable mixture on the plate, in front of the standing veal shank. Spoon 2 to 3 ounces of the shagadelic mango relish over the veal shank. Serve immediately.

Serving suggestion: Accompany with crisp-fried plantain strips and crisp-fried leeks.

FOR THE RUM DEMI

Yield: 1 qt

Olive oil	2 oz
Yellow onions, 1-inch dice	8 oz
Carrots, roughly chopped	4 oz
Celery, roughly chopped	4 oz



Leeks, roughly chopped	4 oz
Fresh garlic, slivered	3/4 oz
Dark rum	3/4 C
Water	1 qt
Demi-glacé, dry mix	3/4 C
Chipotle powder	1/4 tsp
Whole peppercorns	1 tsp
Bay leaves	2 each
Dried oregano leaves	1/4 tsp
Dried thyme leaves	1/4 tsp
Fresh cilantro stems	10 each
Veal demi-glacé	1 C
Salt	1 1/2 tsp

1. In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add all vegetables, except garlic, and cook for 6 to 8 minutes, stirring frequently

2. Add the garlic and cook until all the vegetables are tender, about 4 to 5 minutes.

3. Add the rum and simmer until all the alcohol is cooked out, about 3 to 4 minutes.

4. Combine the water and all the remaining ingredients in a mixing container and thoroughly blend to incorporate all ingredients.

5. Add demi-glacé mixture to the vegetables, return to a boil, and then simmer for 10 to 12 minutes.

6. Strain sauce and reserve.

FOR THE VEGETABLE MIXTURE

Butter	2 oz
Fresh garlic, chopped	1 oz
Yellow onions, 1-inch dice	12 oz
Portobello mushroom caps, cut 1/4 in x 1/4 in x 1 in long	12 oz
Carrots, oblique cut and cooked in salted water	1 lb
Salt	3/4 tsp
Freshly ground black pepper	1/4 tsp

1. In a sauté pan, heat the butter and sauté the onions and garlic until onions become tender, about 2 to 3 minutes. Be careful not to burn the garlic.

2. Add the mushrooms and sauté for an additional 2 minutes. Add the carrots and toss well to thoroughly blend. Salt and pepper to taste. Reserve.

FOR THE CHA CHA YAMS

Yams, 1 1/2-inch dice	5 lb
Water	4 gal
Salt	1/4 C
Butter	6 oz
Cayenne	3/4 tsp
Chipotle powder	1/4 tsp
Ground coriander	3/4 tsp
Ground cinnamon	1/4 tsp
Fresh orange juice	1/4 C
Granulated garlic	1/2 tsp
Ground white pepper	1/4 tsp
Salt	1 1/2 tsp

1. Bring the water to a boil, add the salt and cook yams until tender. Drain and place them into a mixing bowl. Add remaining ingredients and mix until smooth. Reserve.

FOR THE SHAGADELIC MANGO RELISH

Yield: 24 oz

Cherry tomatoes, halved	12 oz
Fresh mango, 3/8-inch dice	8 oz
Red onions, 3/8-inch dice	4 oz
Fresh mint, finely chopped	1/2 C
Salt	3/4 tsp
Granulated garlic	1/4 tsp
Dried oregano leaves	1/4 tsp
Habanero peppers, seeded, minced	1/2 tsp
Lime juice, freshly squeezed	2 Tbs

1. Combine all ingredients into a large mixing bowl and toss well to thoroughly blend.

Menu price: \$17.95; food cost/serving: 37% to 38%

* The following are sources of precooked veal shanks to execute this recipe. For additional suppliers, consult your distributor.

Allen Brothers	773-890-5100
CulinArte Bonewerks	800-542-3032
Hormel Foods (pork shanks)	507-437-4345
Provimi Veal	800-833-8325
Straus Veal & Lamb	414-421-5250
Swissland Packing	815-698-2382

* To lend additional Caribbean credibility, we added a mango relish that uses fresh mint and habanero peppers. The relish is a spin on a traditional pico de gallo. The mint gives a cooling and distinctive flavor and contrast to the relish. Mangos have become mainstream over the last several years and, in combining the habaneros, we have achieved a pleasant balance.

* To add color, contrast, crunch and flavor, garnish this dish with crisp plantain strips.

* When people think of the Caribbean, the exotic tropical drinks that usually come to mind are rum-based. To give this dish an interesting flavor and leverage the glamour of rum, we decided to incorporate dark rum into the demi-glacé.

* The use of spiced yams is an interesting twist over conventional mashed potatoes and, by adding some complementary flavors and spices, we are able to achieve the highly desirable "sweet heat" flavor profile that has become very popular.

