

Mary Anne's Slow Cooker Beef Stew

It's football season and the holiday season is fast approaching; You probably don't have time to stand over the stove and cook. Well, fret no more! Here is a recipe that takes about 15 minutes prep time; you then put everything into your slow cooker and in 8 hours it's ready to serve.

6 tablespoons vegetable oil

3 pounds stew meat

Or

3 pounds cut-up chuck roast

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

2 (15-ounce) cans beef broth or stock

2 medium onions, chopped

4 stalks celery, chopped

4 large carrots, sliced

6 small red or butter potatoes, quartered

2 (15-ounce) cans diced tomatoes

2-4 cloves garlic, chopped

4 sprigs thyme, plus leaves for garnish

Or

1/2 - 1 teaspoon dried thyme

Splash of red wine, about 1/4 cup

Cooked wide noodles, rice, or mashed potatoes

Put a large skillet over medium-high heat and add the oil. Season the stew meat with salt and pepper, to taste, and dredge in the flour, shaking off any excess. Add the stew meat to the pan and brown on all sides, about 8 minutes.

Remove the meat from the pan and set aside on a plate. Pour the broth or stock into the skillet to deglaze and scrape up all the brown bits on the bottom. Turn off the heat and let it sit.

In the pan of the slow cooker, add half of the chopped vegetables and place half of the meat on top. Add the remaining vegetables, remaining meat, tomatoes, garlic, the broth from the pan, and the thyme. Add a splash of red wine, if using.* Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 8 hours or high about 3 1/2 to 4 hours.

To serve, put a big spoonful of noodles, rice, or mashed potatoes on each plate. Top with some of the stew and garnish with some fresh thyme leaves, if desired. Serve with crusty bread and a side salad. Serves 8.

Note: If you are really crunched for time, many grocery stores already have the veggies chopped and ready to go. It may cost more, but it will save you time and frustration.

*Note: A splash of wine is about 2 times around the pan with the bottle.