

An Erev Pesach Plan

It's a scene that plays out in countless households every year. It's *erev Pesach*, around 11 a.m. You've been awake since the very early hours of the morning, as has everyone else because the kids are excited that there's no school. The *chametz* has been burned, the garbage bags have all been driven over to the local pickup area and, quite frankly, the morning's excitement has worn off. All of a sudden, everyone is hungry and all eyes turn to you. Come to think of it, you're kind of hungry too. You offer the kids a plate of tuna or a

hard boiled egg and they just look at you. You try again, full of hope, "Look guys! Cheddar cheese!" but no one is falling for your cheese-pushing ways, least of all your husband, who is now – along with the kids – standing in front of the fridge, looking inside as if there were a waitress hiding there, just waiting to take his order. *Sorry guys*, you think, and go back to peeling potatoes.

Now let's change the scene a bit:

Same house, same kitchen, same you. But this time you are you with a plan. The night before, after *bedikat*

mixture to the large pot and use the frying pan to brown the short ribs or meat of your choice. Don't crowd the meat in the pan; it might take a few batches to brown all the meat. Once it's all browned, add the meat to the large pot and immediately pour the wine into the frying pan. There will be some smoke and sizzling coming from the frying pan – this is a good thing. Use a spatula to scrape up all the deliciousness from the bottom of the frying pan. When the wine is mostly gone, pour whatever is left in the frying pan into the large pot because that's where all the flavor is hiding. Now would be a good time for you to have a sip or three of wine, a special treat that's just for you.

Add two cans of tomato sauce into the large pot, mixing like you really mean it.

Sprinkle salt and pepper to your liking, and add 1 teaspoon turmeric because it's delicious.

Pour the chicken soup or water into the large pot and give the whole thing a good mix. Set it over medium heat, bringing the stew to a low simmer. Cover and let it cook while you form the meatballs.

There is the fancy option here and then there's my way of doing this.

For the fancy, go ahead and get out a bowl. Mix the ground meat (Chicken/turkey) in it, adding in spices and maybe an egg. Form neat little meatballs, line them up on a plate and, one at a time, lovingly place them inside the pot. Or, if you're me, form the meatballs as you go, straight from the foam packaging that the meat comes in. No eggs, no spices, just trusting that all the other ingredients in the pot will make the meatballs delicious. Add



THE WELLNESS MAMALAH

BY JENNIFER WISE

chametz, when all the kids were in bed, you took a look around the house and saw that there was still much to do. You knew that you'd be awake for another few hours at least, so why not make a beef stew? The house would smell great, it only takes a short time to prep and you'll be ahead of the game when 11 a.m. rolls around tomorrow morning. Also, your family might even start clapping when you warm up the stew for lunch and, let's be real, who couldn't use a round of applause on *erev Pesach*?

While beef stew can be made in a

crock-pot, on the stove or in the oven, I prefer the oven method. If you cannot sacrifice precious oven space, or even one of your stovetop burners, then opt for the crock-pot method. Don't have a kosher for Pesach crock-pot*? Get one. Now. Go. I'll wait. It's one of my most prized Pesach possessions and worth every penny, especially if you snag one on sale during the year. (Be sure to *toivel* the insert. There's nothing quite like the feeling of having an awesome plan and then having that plan foiled by not having the right tools ready to go.)

Oven Beef Stew

Ingredients

1 onion diced
6 cloves of garlic, chopped
1 carton mushrooms, sliced
5 stalks celery, cut into 2" pieces
8 carrots, peeled and cut into 2" pieces
10 medium red potatoes, scrubbed and quartered
1 sweet potato, peeled and cut to 2" cubes
4-5 lbs short ribs or 3 lbs roast of your choice, cut into small pieces, or cut up cubes of chicken
½ cup wine
2 cans tomato paste
Salt
Pepper
Turmeric
3 cups of chicken soup or water
1 lb. ground meat, turkey or chicken
1 egg
Olive oil

Directions

Preheat the oven to 250 degrees.**

Take out your largest pot (oven-safe if you want to bake it), and start by adding a teaspoon of oil and heating it over a medium flame on the stovetop.

Meanwhile, in a frying pan, heat a few teaspoons of oil and sauté the onions and garlic, adding in the mushrooms once the onions start to brown. While the onions are cooking, add the carrots, celery, potatoes and sweet potatoes to the large pot, and let them sweat. Keep the pot covered, only opening it to mix the vegetables every few minutes. By the 10-minute mark, the vegetables should be softened.

Add the onion-garlic-mushroom



This picture shows the stew made with chicken

them to the pot, one at a time, as you make them, thereby avoiding dirtying any more dishes than necessary.

Wash and dry your meatball-y hands, shut the flame under the pot and remove the cover. Cut a piece of foil (if you have any left after covering your whole kitchen in foil, ha!), place it over the pot and re-cover it, pushing down the cover until there is an airtight seal. Put the beef stew into the oven, set a timer and forget about it until the house smells amazing, 2.5 to 3 hours.

Once the hours have passed and you're ready for bed, transfer the stew (it's hot, be careful!) to a re-heatable container, cover and store in the fridge. Wash the pot now so that it's ready for chicken soup making in the morning. Or you can just leave well

enough alone, store the stew in the pot in the fridge and just make soup after lunch tomorrow, totally up to you.

*Crock-pot method:

Sauté the onions, garlic and mushrooms. Add that mixture, along with all the other vegetables into the crock-pot. Brown the meat, deglaze the pan and add that and the tomato paste and just 2 cups of soup or water into the crock-pot. Add the spices and mix well. Form the meatballs, and place in crock-pot, making sure they are mostly submerged under the liquid. Cook on low for 8-10 hours or on high for 4 hours.

**By the way, this can totally be cooked on the stovetop. Using the same foil method as above, just leave the pot on the stove over a very low flame, for 2-3 hours.