Spiced Beef Sugo with Pappardelle

serves 4

The Sugo

2 lbs. beef stew meat in cubes
1/3 cup flour
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. ground black pepper
1 large yellow onion, diced
1 large carrot, peeled and diced
2 stalks celery, diced
6 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
2 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. olive oil
2 tbsp. tomato paste
1 cup red wine
½ tsp. cinnamon
¼ tsp. allspice
¼ tsp. nutmeg
¼ tsp. cardamom
2 tbsp. dark cocoa powder
3-4 cups beef broth

To Finish

4 radishes, very thinly sliced
pink peppercorns
1 tbsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary
1 lb. Pappardelle, cooked to package directions

Put the flour, salt, and pepper in a large zip-lock bag. Add the meat cubes, seal the bag and shake it to coat the meat evenly. (You could just toss it all in a bowl, but then you have to clean the bowl.)

Preheat the oven to 325° Fahrenheit.

Heat a medium sized Dutch oven over a high flame. Add the 2 tablespoons olive oil, then in two batches, brown the beef after shaking the excess flour off (you don't want to crowd the pan, or the beef will not brown and will begin to stew before you want it to.) Remove the beef and set aside. Reduce the heat a little so you don't burn the bits left in the pan, add another teaspoon or so of olive oil, then dump in the onions, carrot, celery, and garlic. Increase the heat to high again and sauté the vegetables until softened and starting to

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brown. Add the red wine and reduce a little. Add the tomato paste, spices, and cocoa powder. Put the beef back in and add beef broth to cover about 3 to 4 cups. Bring to a simmer, cover and put in the oven for 2 hours, or until the beef is tender.

Now, remove the beef and shred it, or cut it into smaller cubes, whatever you want, just make it bite-sized. Set aside while you deal with the sauce. I hope you have an inversion (stick) blender, because it is so much easier to do this step with one.

Blend the sauce until smooth with an inversion blender (if you don't have one, you will have to use a blender or food processor, which is just messy.) Heat the sauce over a medium flame and reduce until thickened - like a thick gravy. Adjust the seasoning - that means add salt as necessary. Stir in the meat. Voila - a sugo.

To serve, divide the pappardelle between four soup-plates, spoon some sauce over the noodles, top with radish slices and sprinkle with a few pink peppercorns and chopped rosemary. Ta-Da!

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