

The Horvath Hungarian Gulyasleves : Goulash Soup

Originally made as a thick soup into which one dipped the perennial coarse rye bread, the word Gulyas means “herdsman” originating from the Middle ages when massive herds of cattle were driven to Europe’s biggest markets. It slowly became popular in city folk’s kitchens, and even in the elegant drawing rooms of the wealthy, becoming the most well-known Hungarian specialty. In fact, Gulyas is considered one of the five most popular meat dishes in America (according to a Gallup poll from the early 1970’s). Hungarian purists admonish cooks: never use flour, any other spices other than caraway seeds and never use wine nor brown sauce. Nonetheless there are many variations on the gulyas theme. This is how my mother made it.

Preparation

2 ½ pounds beef chuck or round cut into ¾ inch cubes
2 medium onions chopped
2 TBS vegetable oil
2 garlic cloves minced
4 ripe tomatoes cut into chunks or 1 pint grape seed or cherry tomatoes halved.
2 bell peppers, (I like to use one green pepper and one half of a red pepper and one half of a yellow pepper) cut into 1 ½ inch pieces.
1-pound potatoes cut into 1 inch squares
2 large carrots cut into 1-inch pieces or 1 package baby carrots halved
2 TBS sweet paprika (if you like you can use spicy paprika)
salt and pepper to taste
Pinch of caraway seeds (optional), Dollop of sour cream (optional)

Other variations from other regions of Hungary : add green beans, kohlrabi or parsley root, hot cherry peppers (adding toward the end of the cooking), bay leaf and marjoram, or make the dish with other meats.

Preparation: Heat the oil in a Dutch oven or deep wide pot. When it is hot add the chopped onion and fry until the onions are brown, almost caramelized. Reduce the heat and add the chopped tomatoes and peppers and simmer for two minutes. Remove the pot from the heat. Crush the garlic with the caraway seeds, if used and a little salt. Stir in the paprika and the garlic mixture. Add the meat and enough warm water to cover the meat. (Cold water tends to make the meat tough). If you would like the dish to be soupier add more water. Cover and simmer about 60-90 depending on the cut of meat you have used. Add the potatoes and carrots and any other vegetables you are using and simmer until the potatoes are soft and the meat is tender. Adjust the seasoning. Serve over rice or dumplings!

If you make the paprikás sauce you can add chicken, (for chicken paprikás chicken cut into pieces and cook 1 hour), veal in cubes (for veal pökölt cook about 2 hours), or potatoes and for a vegetarian dish lots more vegetables for lesco! (cook until the potatoes are soft)

Serves 8 and is even better tasting the next day.