

Beef Wellington

1 kg centre fillet of beef, trimmed (the timings below work perfectly for a fillet of roughly 10cm in diameter)
olive oil
2 large knobs of unsalted butter
3 sprigs of fresh rosemary
1 red onion
2 cloves of garlic
600 g mixed mushrooms
100 g chicken livers, (cleaned)
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
½ teaspoon truffle oil, (optional)
50 g fresh breadcrumbs
1 x 500 g block puff pastry
1 large free-range egg
For the gravy:
2 onions
4 sprigs of fresh thyme
1 heaped teaspoon blackcurrant jam
100 ml Maderia wine
1 heaped teaspoon English mustard
2 heaped teaspoons plain flour, plus extra for dusting
600 ml beef stock, (hot)

Beef Wellington celebrates the luxurious and very tender fillet of beef and is one of those ultimate blowout dishes that hits the right spot several times in one meal. When you've made this once, you'll get a sense of how you can perfect it in your oven and make it work for parties and special occasions; once prepared it's super-easy to cook and serve.

Preheat a large frying pan on a high heat. Rub the beef all over with sea salt and black pepper. Pour a good lug of oil into the pan, then add the beef, 1 knob of butter and 1 sprig of rosemary. Sear the beef for 4 minutes in total, turning regularly with tongs, then remove to a plate. Wipe out the pan and return to a medium heat. Peel the onion and garlic, then very finely chop with the mushrooms and put into the pan with the remaining knob of butter and another lug of oil. Strip in the rest of the rosemary leaves and cook for 15 minutes, or until soft and starting to caramelize, stirring regularly. Toss the livers and Worcestershire sauce into the pan and cook for another few minutes, then tip the contents onto a large board and drizzle with the truffle oil (if using). Finely chop it all by hand with a big knife, to a rustic, spreadable consistency. Taste and season to perfection, then stir in the breadcrumbs (you can use pancakes to line the pastry and absorb the juices, but I prefer using breadcrumbs like this).

Preheat the oven to 210°C/425°F/gas 7. On a flour-dusted surface, roll out the pastry to 30cm x 40cm. With one of the longer edges in front of you, spread the mushroom pâté over the pastry, leaving a 5cm gap at either end and at the edge furthest away from you – eggwash these edges. Sit the beef on the pâté then, starting with the edge nearest to you, snugly wrap the pastry around the beef, pinching the ends to seal. Transfer the Wellington to a large baking tray lined with greaseproof paper, with the pastry seal at the base, and brush all over with eggwash (you can prep to this stage, then refrigerate until needed – just get it out 1½ hours before cooking so it's not fridge-cold). When you're ready to cook, heat the tray

on the hob for a couple of minutes to start crisping up the base, then transfer to the oven and cook for 40 minutes for blushing, juicy beef – the two end portions will be more cooked, but usually some people prefer that.

Meanwhile, for the gravy, peel and roughly chop the onions and put into a large pan on a medium heat with a lug of oil and the thyme leaves. Cook for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, then stir in the jam and simmer until shiny and quite dark. Add the Madeira, flame with a match, cook away, then stir in the mustard and flour, gradually followed by the stock. Simmer to the consistency you like, then blend with a stick blender and pass through a sieve, or leave chunky. Once cooked, rest the Wellington for 5 minutes, then serve in 2cm-thick slices with the gravy and steamed greens.