

BRAISED SHORT RIB MAC & CHEESE

INGREDIENTS

For the Short Ribs

3 pounds beef short ribs (on the bone)
kosher salt and fresh ground pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 granny smith apple, diced
1 onion, diced
2 celery ribs, diced
3 garlic cloves, smashed
5 sprigs thyme
1/2 cup tomato paste
1 cup dry white wine
2 cups chicken stock
1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
3 tablespoons honey

For the Mac & Cheese

1 12 oz can of chopped tomatoes, most of the liquid removed
1 pound fork-sized pasta (I used penne)
6 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup flour
1 cup whole milk
2 cups chicken broth
2 cups shredded mild Cheddar cheese
2 cups shredded sharp white Cheddar cheese
1 cup Panko bread crumbs, pan toasted with 3 tablespoons butter

DIRECTIONS

Note: I do this in two stages over two days, because it is a very time intensive recipe (5+ hours, though there is a lot of passive time, where things are in the oven), but it can be done in one. The short ribs can also be done in a crock pot.

Preheat oven to 300F. Season short ribs generously with salt and ground pepper. Heat oil in a medium sized dutch oven. Add short ribs, brown on all sides and remove. Add apple, onion, celery, garlic and thyme and cook 6 minutes. Add the tomato paste and cook for 2 minutes until it deepens in color. Add wine, chicken stock, vinegar and honey and bring to a boil. Return the short ribs to the pot, bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Cover and transfer to the oven, braising for 3 hours. Check on it a couple of times, particularly in the last half hour, to see if the meat is tender. It should be "fall off the bone".

Remove short ribs from the pot and set aside to cool. strain the sauce into a large bowl and refrigerate to solidify the fat. When the meat is cool enough to handle, shred and discard the bones. If you are doing this over 2 days, this is where I would stop. If going at it in one, move along.

Once the liquid is cooled, remove the solidified fat. Put the de-fatted liquid in a sauce pan and bring to a simmer. Add the chopped tomatoes, followed by the short rib meat. Heat through and then set aside. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Cook pasta in the boiling water, stirring occasionally until cooked through but firm to the bite. Drain, return macaroni to pot, and stir in short-rib and tomato mixture into the pasta. Cook over medium heat until the macaroni absorbs some of the liquid from the stew, about 4 minutes. Remove from heat.

Preheat oven to 350F. Butter a baking dish.

Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir flour into melted butter and cook until bubbly, 1 to 2 minutes. Slowly stream half-and-half and chicken broth into the butter mixture while stirring. Bring the mixture to a boil and continue to cook while stirring continually until thickened and bubbly, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove saucepan from heat. Melt mild Cheddar cheese and sharp Cheddar cheese into the butter mixture one handful at a time, stirring to incorporate each addition before adding the next. Season the cheese mixture with pepper and pour over the penne; stir to coat pasta evenly.

Transfer the mixture to the prepared baking dish and top with Panko mixture. Bake in preheated oven until crust is golden brown and the liquid is bubbling, 15 to 20 minutes. Cool 10 minutes before serving.