

ALAN'S BRISKET

This is a slow cooked, braised meat dish that is excellent for holiday celebrations. The time of cooking is the most important. It should be in the oven for a least five or six hours, while up to eight hours is good, maybe even better. The choice of the pot is also very important. I use the Le Creuset cast iron pot with a fitted lid from France. I highly recommend it. It has to be heavy with a well fitted lid to keep the moisture from evaporating too quickly.

The choice of the brisket is also very important. I buy the second-cut brisket, which has more fat than the first-cut one. The fat holds up well to the long cooking method and infuses the meat with a tremendous amount of flavor. I buy it at the Oakland Kosher meat shop on College Avenue across from the Rockridge Bart Station. I have not tried a non-Kosher brisket so I recommend the Kosher meat as well.

The next most important ingredient is the Port wine to go on top of the brisket. You must select a good quality wine. The rule of thumb I use is that if you would enjoy drinking it, then it is good to cook with. Too many people assume that cooking wine can be of lower quality, but the flavors of the wine will be creating the flavors of the dish, so the dish can only be as good as its ingredients. As a guide something in the twenty dollar range should be used. Next, the vegetables should all be fresh and delicious. You will need:

- A second-cut brisket (figure about half a pound per person, or consult the butcher);
- Two large yellow onions;
- 3-4 carrots, celery;
- 5-6 cloves of garlic;
- Two stalks of green onions;
- A good bottle of Port wine;
- Some oil, salt and pepper

The oven should be heated to 325 degrees. Begin by sautéing one onion in oil slowly in the bottom of the pot, allowing it to brown slowly so the sugars caramelize. Remove the onion and put in the brisket, cook over medium heat until it is brown on both sides, and season it with salt and pepper. Put the cooked onions on top of the brisket, and add the other chopped onion with the chopped carrots, celery, green onions, and garlic. Pour about half the bottle of Port wine on top and add a little water, about a cup. There should be enough liquid to sort of cover the meat. You can adjust with more water or wine. Put the lid on the pot and place it in the oven. After about two hours, while your house is filling with a heavenly aroma, you can begin checking the meat, and adding more wine as you feel is necessary. About half way through the meat should be turned over and the liquid adjusted. By the end the vegetables and the wine will have reduced to a kind of sauce that will be infused in the meat. It should not be too liquid, but rather like a barbecue sauce.

When you are ready to eat, the meat should be sliced against the grain. It can be kept warm in the pot in the oven, and then served in the pot or on a special platter. This is a great dish and I wish you success. The final determination of the cooking time and the amount of wine and water can only be judged by the cook at the given circumstance. I am sure you will make the right decision.

Comments ? Let Alan know what you thought @ atreister@earthlink.net