

Bobotie (South African Beef Casserole)



Bobotie (bow·buh·tai) is a South African casserole with curried ground beef at the bottom and a thin layer of egg custard on top.

Bobotie's roots date back to the 17th century. Dutch traders set up camp in the area that is now Cape Town as a stopping point on their journeys back and forth to Indonesia. The traders brought spices, cooking techniques, and recipes with them. While the specifics are a bit vague, it is thought by some that the original bobotie recipe came from Indonesia and was adapted to fit the available ingredients.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 teaspoons salt, plus more to taste
- 5 teaspoons curry powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 pounds ground beef
- 4 bay laurel leaves, divided
- 1 rounded tablespoon tomato paste
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar, or to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/3 cup Indian-style fruit chutney, or to taste
- 3 slices white bread, crusts removed
- 1 1/2 cups milk, divided

- 2 large eggs
- 1 pinch cayenne pepper

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. Heat olive oil and butter in a large oven-proof skillet over medium heat. Add onions and salt, and cook until just beginning to soften and turn translucent, 3 to 5 minutes.
3. Stir in curry powder, cumin, turmeric, black pepper, and oregano, and cook for 1 to 2 minutes more.
4. Add ground beef, and cook, stirring, while breaking the meat up into small crumbles. Add 1 bay leaf, tomato paste, and garlic, and cook, stirring, for another 2 minutes.
5. Stir in lemon juice and zest, vinegar, Worcestershire, and chutney. Smooth the top, and simmer mixture gently for 5 minutes.
6. Meanwhile, add bread to a bowl and cover with 1/2 cup of milk, toss, and let stand for 5 minutes. Squeeze excess milk back into the bowl and add soaked bread to meat. Mash, smash and stir mixture until bread is thoroughly blended in.
7. Add remaining 1 cup milk to the bowl; add eggs, cayenne, and pinch of salt, and whisk thoroughly. Pour gently over meat, and top with 3 or more bay leaves.
8. Bake in the preheated oven until custard on top is set and lightly golden brown, about 45 minutes. Let rest 5 minutes before serving.