



NOTEBOOK / **food & drink**

PERFECT SHEPHERD'S PIE

For winter comfort food, it's tough to top this classic English dish. And with these tips from chef Jonathan McDonald, of Philadelphia's Pub & Kitchen, it's easier to make than you think.

SHEPHERD'S PIE WAS FIRST SERVED AS FUEL FOR peasants working long days in the potato fields and sheep meadows of England and Scotland. (The name first appears in the 1800s.) On Sundays the women would empty their cupboards (lamb meat pulled off a leftover roast, slightly cruste-d-over mashed potatoes, an onion, peas), layer what they found in a pot, and bake it. With a dash of water, it could be reheated repeatedly; mixed with extra mashed potatoes, rolled into patties, and fried, it was a meatier version of another popular dish

called bubble and squeak (named for the noise it let out in the frying pan). Executive chef Jonathan McDonald specializes in exactly this kind of food at Pub & Kitchen. His shepherd's pie is fairly traditional but has a few modern twists. Specifically he suggests using mutton, the meat from older lamb, instead of young spring lamb, as well as adding turnips and parsnips (or any root vegetable) to the mix. And he insists that cooking shepherd's pie should be as unhurried and soothing as eating it: "I like to make it on a Saturday afternoon at home with a few pints going." —CLAIRE MARTIN



STEP 1

Chop **2 lbs lamb** into chunks larger than regular ground meat. In a large, heavy-bottomed pot or casserole, brown the lamb in **2 oz olive oil**. Remove it from the pot.



STEP 2

Peel and dice **1 onion**, **2 carrots**, **2 parsnips**, and **1 turnip**. Put them in the pot and cook until they start to soften. Stir in **1 tsp tomato paste**, scraping the lamb drippings from the bottom of the pot.



STEP 3

Return the lamb to the pot. Pour in **2 tsp Worcestershire sauce** and **1 cup beer** (which will help the meat soak up flavor from the bottom and sides of the pot), then reduce by one quarter.



photographs by **John Kernick**

Add **1 cup lamb stock** or **low-sodium chicken broth**, **two sprigs of thyme**, and a **bay leaf**. Simmer for 45 minutes. Top with **mashed potatoes** and bake in a preheated 375° oven until golden brown, about 20 minutes. Serves 6.

STEP 4

THREE BEERS THAT WILL PERFECT YOUR MEAL

THE KNEE-JERK CHOICE IS GUINNESS, BUT THESE THREE ARE GREAT FOOLS FOR THIS DISH.



SAMUEL SMITH'S OLD BREWERY PALE ALE

The best contrast to the dish is a bitter, dry ale, like this Samuel Smith. According to McDonald, "You want something to balance the gaminess and sweetness of the lamb and tomato and Worcestershire."



BRECKENRIDGE BREWERY'S AUTUMN ALE

This ale is bitter, nutty, and dark — yet not heavy, making it a natural match for the hearty lamb flavor of shepherd's pie. Says McDonald, "It's not going to coat your mouth and weigh you down."



BELHAVEN 80 SHILLING CLASSIC CHOICE EXPORT ALE

This Scottish ale is bitter, dry, clean, and sharp, like a traditional English pale ale. It's also softer, rounder, and smoother, which allows the flavors of the shepherd's pie to linger longer.