

SWISS STEAK: THE IMPROVED VERSION OF A CLASSIC RECIPE

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Swiss steak was a mainstay of our home kitchen, when I was young, mainly because it was a way to make inexpensive cuts of beef taste reasonably good. However, it wasn't one of my favorite dishes, because even after braising for a couple of hours, the meat was still relatively dry and bland.

The problem was that round steak, which was the typical cut Mom used for Swiss steak, is the wrong cut of meat to use. Round steak is lean, and has little collagen in it. While that works well for stir fry, it doesn't work well for braising. The reason is that collagen, which makes a grilled or pan-fried steak tough, amazingly does the opposite for braised meat. That's because as it cooks in the liquid, over a couple hours, it starts to break down into gelatin, giving the meat a moist, silky texture. Therefore, if you want the best cut of meat for braising, use a beef cut that has plenty of collagen in it; chuck steak or chuck roast. In this recipe, I use chuck roast, because it's often much easier to find than thick cut chuck steaks. You just cut your own steaks from the roast, and the price is usually comparable to round steak.

This recipe is delicious with mashed potatoes.

- 2-3 lbs Chuck Roast
- Salt & pepper
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped thin
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 tablespoons of tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon of white flour
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can of diced tomatoes
- 1 ½ cups of chicken or beef broth

1. Heat oven to 300 degrees.
2. Cut the Chuck Roast into 3 to 4 inch pieces, about 1 ¼ inches thick. Trim off the fat and gristle, as well. Dry them and sprinkle with salt and pepper
3. Heat Dutch oven to medium high on your stove top.
4. Place Chuck meat in the hot pan, and brown for 2-3 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate when done and set aside.
5. Add the vegetable oil to the Dutch oven, then add onions and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Add garlic, thyme, and tomato paste, and flour and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in diced tomatoes and broth and bring to a simmer.
6. Return the steaks with any accumulated juices to the Dutch oven. Cover with the lid, and place into the oven. Cook until the steak is tender, about 2 hours. Transfer steaks to a platter, and let rest for about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Pour sauce over steaks and serve.