



Stew and Dumplings

an adaptable one-pan Winter-warmer

Almost anything can be included, as long as it isn't the kind that goes to mush if cooked too long. The basic dish needs to be simmered slowly over a low heat and for long enough to tease out the richest flavours. The dumplings can be left out but, for my money, they are the crowning glory of any stew. They can be made the traditional way using beef suet, but I have substituted vegetable margarine in consideration of anyone who can't have animal fat.

500g diced meat
2 sticks celery
1 large onion
2 medium to large carrots
1 medium turnip
1 medium swede
1 parsnip
2 medium potatoes
1 cup sliced green beans
1 can diced tomatoes
2 litres water
3-4 stock cubes or tsps of stock powder
1-2 Tbsps gravy thickener
1 tsp anchovy sauce (optional flavour enhancer)
salt, pepper and spices to taste



Dumplings

4 rounded Tbsp self-raising flour
1 level Tbsp baking powder
30g vegetable margarine
a pinch of salt cold water

Any meat can be used, even mince, so the stew can be adapted to suit dietary and cultural requirements. If you're a vegetarian, simply leave the meat out. Those of you who favour using a slow cooker, put in all ingredients except for the thickener (this is added just before the dumplings go in) and heat for 4 hours or more until cooked through. If using the stove top, place the meat in a large pan with 1 litre of water, the crumbled stock cubes or powder and the anchovy sauce, bring to the boil, then turn down and simmer covered for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. In the meantime, the vegetables can be prepared. Slice or dice these small (about 1½ cm or ½ inch cubes). When the meat is ready, add the rest of the water plus the vegies and any desired spices, but hold off on the potatoes, parsnip and beans. Stir in gently while bringing back to the boil, then turn down and continue simmering for a further 30 minutes. Finally, add the rest of the vegetables and simmer for another 30 minutes while you prepare the dumplings.

Dumplings: Mix the flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl then rub in the fat to breadcrumb consistency. Gradually add water and lightly mix in with a fork until the mixture binds together – don't make it too sticky. Handle as little as possible while you divide and form into rough balls. This recipe makes 4 – if you want more, just do it, but remember that they will swell with cooking to about the size of a tennis ball, so the pan must be big enough to accommodate them all. When the stew has had its time (about 1½ hours), mix the gravy thickener to a thin cream with a little water and stir in carefully. Here's when you can also add those softer ingredients like peas, broccoli and capsicum. Now place the dumplings on the top, replace the cover and let simmer for 20 minutes. Serving up is easier if you transfer the dumplings to a warmed plate while you dish out the stew.

Serves up to 6

Freezes moderately well

Leftovers are great for Encore Pie (see recipe R12)

For an ideal slow-cooking aid, see this month's Handy Hints

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