INDIRECT · MEDIUM

Beef Cheeks in Red Wine, Braised in a Dutch Oven on the Kamado

Three hours of red wine, cast iron and a thread of olive-wood smoke your kitchen oven simply cannot make. The braise that justifies lighting the kamado in midwinter.



PREP	COOK	SERVINGS	TEMPERATURE
30 min	180 min	6	150 °C

Ingredients

- **1500 g** beef cheeks, trimmed of silverskin
- **2 ud** large onion
- **2 ud** carrot
- **4 ud** garlic clove
- **12 ud** small shallots, whole
- **750 ml** full-bodied red wine (Monastrell, Rioja or Ribera del Duero)
- **500 ml** beef stock
- **40 ml** extra virgin olive oil
- **30 g** plain flour
- **2 ud** bay leaf
- **2 ud** thyme sprig
- **10 g** salt
- **1 cdita** freshly ground black pepper
- **2 ud** olive-wood chunks

Method

1 TRIM AND SEASON

With a thin knife, strip the silverskin off the beef cheeks: left on, it shrinks with the heat and buckles the meat. Salt them on both sides, grind black pepper over the top and dust the flour through a sieve in a very fine layer. Let them come up to room temperature for thirty minutes while you light the kamado.

2 LIGHT UP AND HEAT THE POT

Light the kamado for direct cooking, no deflector, and settle it at 230 °C with the lid closed. Put the empty Petromax FT9 on the grate and let it heat for ten minutes: cast iron needs that head start to sear without stalling when the meat goes in. Keep the Rösle silicone and leather barbecue glove within reach, because the handle will be searing hot.

3 SEAR IN TWO BATCHES

Pour the oil into the hot pot and sear the cheeks in two batches, three to four minutes a side, until you have a dark, even crust. Do not crowd them: touching, they weep water and stew instead of browning. Lift them onto a dish and leave the toasted fond in the pot, because that is where the flavour lives.

4 SOFTEN AND DEGLAZE

Tip the onion, carrot, garlic and shallots into the same fat and soften them for ten to twelve minutes with the kamado lid closed, stirring every three or four. Once the onion is sweet and translucent, pour in the red wine, scrape the base with a wooden spoon and let it reduce by half, about eight minutes.

5 DEFLECTOR IN, DOWN TO 150 °C

Lift the pot out with the glove, close the vents almost completely and fit the ConvEGGtor legs up. Drop two olive-wood chunks onto the coals and wait until the smoke turns from thick and white to thin and blue. The ceramic takes twenty to thirty minutes to fall from 230 to 150 °C: do not force it by opening the lid.

6 TWENTY MINUTES OF SMOKE

Return the cheeks to the pot with the stock, the bay and the thyme; the liquid should come two thirds up the meat, not drown it. Set the dutch oven uncovered inside the kamado and close the kamado lid. Twenty minutes like that: the olive smoke dissolves into the sauce, which is precisely what an oven cannot do.

7 COVER AND BRAISE

Put the lid on the pot and hold the dome at 150 °C for another two and a half hours. Try not to open the kamado: every peek costs roughly ten minutes of recovery. At the two-hour mark test with a fork; it is ready when the tines turn inside the meat with no resistance, around 94 °C in the centre.

8 REDUCE THE SAUCE

Lift the cheeks onto a dish and cover them. Fish out the bay and thyme, open the vents to bring the dome to 180 °C and leave the pot uncovered for fifteen minutes, until the sauce coats the back of a spoon. For a smoother sauce, blitz half the vegetables and stir them back in.

9 REST AND SERVE

Slide the meat back into the sauce, put the lid on the dutch oven and rest it for fifteen minutes off the kamado: the cheek draws juice back in and settles. Serve with mashed potato, a good country loaf or sliced potatoes cooked under the meat. It will be better still the next day.

Editor's tips

- Ask your butcher for cheeks already trimmed of silverskin: it is slow work with a small knife, and you can taste the difference on the plate.

- The liquid should reach two thirds up the meat and never cover it: braising is not boiling, and the part that stands proud toasts in the hot air.
- Two olive-wood chunks are plenty: smoke builds up fast in a liquid, and with four the sauce turns bitter.
- Cook them the day before, chill the whole pot and reheat covered at 140 °C: the gelatine redistributes and the sauce gains body.

Gear for this recipe

Big Green Egg Large

mikamado.es/en/kamados/big-green-egg-large

Smokey Olive Wood Olive Wood Chunks 1.5 kg

Those twenty minutes with the pot uncovered are what separate this braise from one made in a kitchen oven: the smoke dissolves into the stock and stays there, underneath the wine. Two olive-wood chunks on the coals are enough, because liquid takes on smoke far faster than a dry cut and too much wood leaves the sauce bitter. Olive is among the gentlest woods for the job.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/smokey-olive-wood-olive-chunks-1-5kg

Petromax FT9 Cast Iron Fire Pot (Dutch Oven)

This braise needs a pot that can go into the kamado at 230 °C, sear the cheeks without stalling in temperature and then hold three hours at 150 °C with the lid on. The Petromax FT9 does all three with the same iron: its mass gives back the heat the meat steals on contact, the legs sit it steady on the grate, and the bail handle lets you lift it out to fit the deflector without spilling the wine.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/petromax-ft9-dutch-oven

Onlyfire GCG-8552 Cooking System (2 grates + rack + 2 deflectors) for Large Kamado

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/onlyfire-gcg8552-sistema-coccion

CIRYCASE Dual-Probe Thermometer, 16.3 cm Probes and Timer

Beef cheeks are not done by the clock but when the core sits around 94 °C and a fork turns without resistance, and every time you open the kamado it costs about ten minutes of recovery. The two 16.3 cm probes on the CIRYCASE reach the bottom of the dutch oven without putting your hand near the rim, and let you check two cheeks of different thickness in one opening, in seconds.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/cirycase-termometro-doble-sonda

Full recipe at: mikamado.es/en/recetas/carrilleras-vino-tinto-cocotte-kamado

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