

Beef Short Ribs with Tomatoes, Roasted Poblanos and Herbs (Costillas de Res a la Mexicana)

Inspired by Rick Bayless, Mexico One Plate At A Time (ISBN 0-684-84186)

1. Roast poblano chiles

5 medium (about 1 pound) fresh poblano chiles

Roast the poblanos directly over a gas flame or on a baking sheet 4 inches below a very hot broiler, turning regularly until the skin has blistered and blackened on all sides, about 5 minutes for an open flame, about 10 minutes for the broiler. Be careful not to char the flesh, only the skin.

Cover with a kitchen towel and let stand for 5 minutes.

Rub off the blackened skin, then pull out the stems and seed pods.

Tear the chiles open and rinse briefly to remove any stray seeds and bits of skin.

Slice into 1/4-inch strips.

2. Sear the meat

2 tablespoons rich-tasting pork lard or vegetable oil
a generous 2 pounds bone-in beef short ribs, trimmed

Heat the oven to 325 degrees F.

In a medium-large (4- to 6-quart) pot (preferably a Dutch oven or Mexican cazuela), heat the lard or oil over medium-high.

Lay in the short ribs in a single, uncrowded layer, working in batches if necessary. When richly browned on one side, about 5 minutes, turn them over and brown the other side, 3 to 5 minutes more.

Remove to a plate and tip off all but a generous coating of oil on the bottom of the pot.

3. Prepare tomato mixture

1 large white onion, sliced

Set the pot back on the stove.

Reduce the heat to medium. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, until golden, about 7 minutes.

6 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped

Add the garlic and stir for another minute.

1 ½ pounds (3 medium-large round or 9 to 12 plum) rip tomatoes, cored and chopped into ½-inch pieces OR one 28-ounce can good-quality tomatoes packed in juice, drained and chopped into ½-inch pieces

Then, add the tomatoes.

Stir occasionally until the tomatoes have softened and lost their juicy look (about 3 minutes for fresh tomatoes, 3 to 5 minutes for canned).

poblano pepper strips

Stir in the poblano strips, salt and the herbs.

1 teaspoon sea salt

1 large sprig fresh epazote, plus an additional sprig (optional) for garnish OR 1 ½ teaspoons chopped fresh thyme and/or marjoram, plus a sprig or two (optional) for garnish

4. Store (optional)

Cover and refrigerate the meat and the flavor base separately. Continue cooking within a few hours of serving.

5. Braise the meat

meat, browned
tomato mixture

Nestle the browned meat into the tomato mixture, spooning some of it over the top. Cover the pot (a piece of foil works for the cazuela) and set in the oven.

After 1 ½ hours, check the meat. It should be fork-tender. If not, re-cover and braise for an extra 15 minutes or so.

6. Serve

Using a spatula, remove the meat to a warm serving platter.

Tip the pot to collect the chunky sauce at one end and spoon off the fat that rises to the top.

7. Store and reheat

There's a warm hominess to this dish if it is made a day or two ahead and stored in the refrigerator until you are ready to reheat it.

To reheat, first discard any solidified fat from the surface. Heat in a covered pot on the stove or in a 325 degree oven.

The finished dish will hold well for an hour or so in a very low oven.