# Our favourite winter dinner

Slow-cooked beef with dark beer, Dijon, ontbijtkoek and a little sambal. A recipe Esther has adapted over the years, and an absolute favourite for her and Bas.



Stew: 4 portions - two to eat and two to freeze.
Chips: 1.5 kg potatoes is Esther's generous batch for two, with extra.
Time: about 6 hours simmering, plus preparation and browning. Chips need two fries per batch and complete cooling between them.

## For the stew

About 1 kg braising beef, preferably feather blade / blade (sukadelappen), in large pieces

Butter: a generous knob for the onions, plus more as needed for the beef

4 large onions, very roughly chopped

330 ml dark brown beer

350 ml ready-to-use beef fond or rich beef stock

3 slices ontbijtkoek, about 1 cm thick

3 tbsp Dijon or French mustard

3 bay leaves and 3 whole cloves

1 scant tbsp sambal oelek

Salt and black pepper, to taste

## For the chips

1.5 kg Bintje potatoes, peeled

Liquid deep-frying fat or beef dripping (ossewit), to the fryer's fill level

## Useful ingredient notes

Use dark brown beer: Corsendonk or a dark brown Hertog Jan are Esther's examples.

Ontbijtkoek is Dutch spiced breakfast cake. Keep that ingredient rather than replacing it with ordinary bread.

The 350 ml fond is ready-to-use liquid. Dilute concentrate according to its label first.

# The slow-cooked beef

## 1. Fry the onions

Melt a generous knob of butter in a heavy casserole. Fry the roughly chopped onions until softened and starting to colour, then lift out and set aside.

## 2. Brown in small batches

Add butter as needed and brown the large beef pieces well, in small batches. Remove each batch when ready. Give the meat room so it browns rather than steams; avoid burning the butter or browned bits.

## 3. Deglaze with the beer

With the beef out, pour the 330 ml beer into the pan and scrape the browned bits from the base. Return the beef and onions and turn the heat right down.

## 4. Add fond, sambal and herbs

Add the 350 ml fond and sambal oelek. Season with pepper and a little salt, allowing for salt in the fond. Push the cloves into the bay leaves to keep them together and add to the pan.

## 5. Add the mustard-covered cake

Spread the ontbijtkoek thickly with the mustard and lay it on top. Let it soften into the sauce, gently stirring it through once it has broken down.

## 6. Give it about six hours

Simmer very gently on the hob with the lid slightly askew. Esther usually cooks it from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Check and stir occasionally; add a small splash of water if the sauce reduces too far. The beef should yield easily to a fork.

## 7. Finish

Remove all three bay leaves and all three cloves. Taste for seasoning. Serve hot over freshly cooked chips; keep the spare stew portions separate for cooling and storage.

# The homemade chips

## 1. Peel and cut

Peel the Bintjes and cut them a little thicker than French fries. Keep pieces as even as practical.

## 2. Rinse and dry

Put into cold water, rinse again in fresh cold water, drain and dry thoroughly on a clean tea towel.

## 3. First fry: 150 degrees C

Fry in batches for about 5 minutes each, until cooked through but still pale. Do not overfill the basket; let the fat return to temperature between batches.

## 4. Cool completely

Drain and spread out the chips. Let them cool completely before the second fry. Do this first round while the stew is still cooking.

## 5. Second fry: 180 degrees C

Fry the cooled chips in batches for about 5 minutes, until crisp and golden. Lift out sooner if needed; use colour and doneness as well as the timer. Avoid dark brown chips.

## 6. Serve

Drain and serve immediately with the hot stew spooned over the chips.

## Keep two portions for another dinner

Divide spare stew into smaller containers to cool quickly. Refrigerate or freeze within two hours. Use refrigerated leftovers within 48 hours or freeze. Defrost in the fridge, then reheat once until steaming hot throughout, stirring as it heats.

Storage reference: Food Standards Agency, food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/cooking-your-food
Recipe and photography: Esther, Essy's Essentials. Prepared from her own kitchen method.