

# Madame Huang's Kitchen 黃媽媽的食談

Posted every Monday at 9:00 am PST, or more often if I get around to it...

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Monday, December 9, 2019

## Chinese borscht



I've recently partnered with the folks at the [Greatest Tomatoes from Europe](#) to celebrate what have to be the most amazing canned tomatoes I have ever tasted. They are so good, in fact, that over the next couple of months I'll be sharing recipes with you that put the spotlight on these tomatoes. Disclaimer: I was provided with a delicious array of these European canned tomatoes as an incentive, and I have to admit that I've been happily incentivizing ever since!

Today is an easy dish for these blustery days: the Chinese version of borscht, Mother Russia's quintessential soup.

Even the name in Chinese tells you that: *Luòsōng* means (and sounds like) "Russian." But as soon as you taste it, you know you've wandered over the border into Manchuria, as those rich, Slavic flavors have been tempered and emboldened by ginger, rice wine, soy sauce, and (yes) sometimes even catsup.

But what really launches this soup into culinary heaven are two things: really great canned tomatoes plus the oxtail that forms the backbone (sorry) of the broth.

A friend of mine recently introduced me to the canned tomatoes of Europe, and I am officially hooked. Full-flavored doesn't even begin to describe them. These taste of pure, ripe tomatoes - nothing else, not even salt.



The most flavorful meat soup yet

And while most canned tomatoes I've used have swum in a thin juice, these are nestled in almost a puree of more tomatoes. Good canned tomatoes are what give this soup the depth it needs to become the perfect bowl of Chinese borscht. If you for some reason you must use a lesser quality canned tomato, don't despair, because you can always add catsup to the soup for a touch more oomph. But that being said, snag a can or two of these imports when you see them because they just might make you smile a bit more.

Now we get to the meat: Criminally underused in the States for no good reason that I can ascertain, oxtails are on my list of best beef cuts ever. Tendons give the cow the opportunity to whisk this appendage around with considerable expressiveness, and those tendons are exactly what give any oxtail soup worth its salt that incredible body.

If cooked well - and by that I mean that just the right amount of time and heat and moisture are applied - those tendons disappear into the soup, while the muscles become almost custardy, the marrow leaking out of the bones and making the soup that much richer.



"Good Graces" named one of The Atlantic's "Exceptional Works of Journalism" for 2017.

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Member, JBF Book Awards Committee



Over 10 million views and counting... Me in Sichuan, July 2017: The caption on this website literally says, "American old lady creates beautiful Sichuan dishes and spent 10 years writing a Chinese cookbook." Shoot me now.

**FINALIST**

## SAVEUR BLOG '17 AWARDS

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BEST SPECIAL INTEREST BLOG

My obsessiveness has been confirmed...

2017 James Beard Awards

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2017 JBA nominee for MFK Fisher Distinguished Writing Award & Best International Cookbook

### Comments

The comment section has been disabled because it became overrun with bots. Sorry about that.

Send any questions to me via email. My gmail address is madamehuang. I'll try to respond, but sometimes that takes a bit of time. Thanks.

## Manchurian Russian soup

Luòsòng tang 羅宋湯

No liquid other than pureed tomatoes

Northeast

Serves 6 as a main dish

### Beef and broth:

- 1 oxtail (2 to 2½ pounds | 1 kg) cut into rounds by the butcher (see Tips)
- 3 tablespoons peanut or vegetable oil
- 2 inches ginger, thinly sliced (about ¼ cup)
- 1 large onion cut into 1-inch | 2 cm chunks
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled and lightly smashed
- 2 bay leaves
- 6 cups | 1.5 liters water
- ¼ cup | 60 ml Shaoxing rice wine
- ¼ cup | 60 ml regular soy sauce



Glorious oxtails

### Vegetables:

- 3 small Yukon Gold or other potatoes
  - 3 carrots, peeled
  - 1 (28 ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes, preferably European (see headnotes)
- Water, as needed
- Optional: up to ½ cup | 125 ml catsup if your canned tomatoes are underwhelming

Handfuls of parsley or cilantro, chopped, for garnish

1. Ideally, start this recipe a day before you plan to serve it, although you can also prep and cook this within 90 minutes.

Rinse the oxtail sections and pat them dry. Heat the bottom part of the pressure cooker on high and then add the oil. Toss in the ginger and fry it for a few seconds to release its fragrance. Add the oxtail and let it sear on one side before turning the pieces over with some metal tongs. Let each side brown and caramelize before turning it (see Tips). When the oxtail has been completely browned, remove it and the ginger to a plate or something, but leave the oil in the pan.



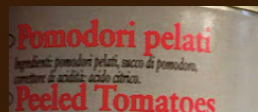
Roll cut carrots

Add the onion and garlic cloves and toss them around in the hot oil until the onion is lightly browned. Return the oxtails and ginger to the pan along with the bay leaves, water, rice wine, and soy sauce. Cover the pan with the top of the pressure cooker, lock it, and place the pan over high heat to bring it to high pressure. Adjust the heat to maintain this high pressure and cook the oxtail for 55 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and let the pressure drop naturally for around 10 minutes before opening the lid away from you so that you don't get scalded.

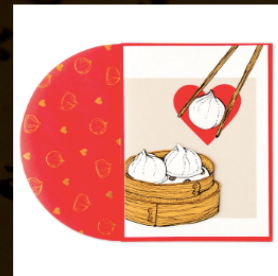
2. While the oxtail is cooking away, prepare the vegetables: Wash the potatoes and cut each one into eighths. (You leave them unpeeled, if you like. I do.) Wash and trim the carrots, and then roll cut them into pieces about 1 inch | 2 cm long. Place the potatoes and carrots in a medium saucepan. Open the can of tomatoes and drain the juices into the saucepan. Slice each tomato into pieces about ¾-inch | .75 cm thick and add them to the saucepan. Pour just enough water into the saucepan to cover the root vegetables and bring the saucepan to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook the vegetables until they are done to your taste, about 15 to 20 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat.

3. When the oxtails are done, pour the pan full of vegetables into the soup, taste, and adjust the seasoning. Add the catsup to taste, if you like. In the best of all worlds, let the soup come to room temperature, cover, and refrigerate it overnight. Then, remove most of the fat before simmering the soup for around 15 minutes to heat it up again. Ladle the soup into individual soup bowls or serve it in a terrine; garnish with lots of chopped parsley or cilantro and serve with bread or rice.

### Tips



My interview with the Good Food Hour on KSRO



My Papyrus card design

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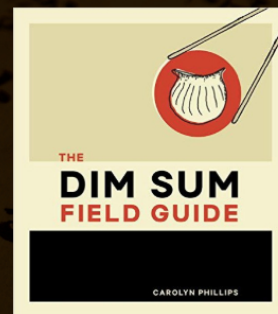
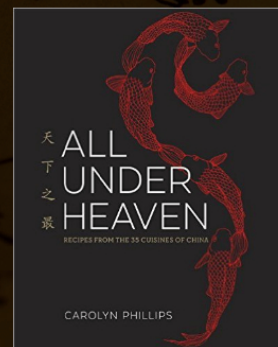
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### Representation

Kimberly Witherspoon  
Inkwell Literary Management

-  Monkey head soup  
I know, I know, this is really about mushrooms, not actual monkey heads. But I got you to look, right? This is actually a recipe that...

If you don't have a pressure cooker, simply brown the meat and onions, etc., as directed in Step 1 and then simmer the meat until it is tender, which should take around 3 hours. The rest of the recipe needs no adjustment.

This is a cold weather soup, so tomatoes are not going to be at their best. That's why I recommend really good quality canned tomatoes.



What else I like: no salt or water!

at December 09, 2019


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#### 黃媽媽 = 黃凱玲



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