



Beef Tenderloin

UNMASKED

Cravings come in all flavors, shapes, and sizes. Perhaps you, like me, have been craving the companionship of close friends around the table. When a small dinner gathering is in order, and I hope it will be soon, something special should be the centerpiece. As few dishes are more festive and elegant than a Beef Wellington, consider breaking bread with loved ones over my version of filet mignon ensconced in prosciutto and puff pastry.

FOR THE DUXELLES:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 pound Crimini mushrooms, finely chopped
- 2 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon minced ginger
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme
- Sea salt
- Fresh ground pepper

FOR THE TENDERLOIN:

- 1 3-pound beef tenderloin
- Sea salt
- Fresh ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 12 slices prosciutto, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard (I prefer Edmond Fallot's tarragon mustard)
- 1 pound puff pastry, thawed (I like Dufour brand)
- 2 eggs, beaten

FOR THE SAUCE:

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup beef stock
- 3 tablespoons Cognac

/ DUXELLES PREPARATION /

Add the butter and olive oil to a nonstick pan and place over medium heat. Once the butter has melted, add the mushrooms, shallots, garlic, ginger, and thyme. Sauté for several minutes until most of the liquid evaporates. Season with salt and pepper to taste and let cool.

/ BEEF PREPARATION /

If the butcher has not already done so, tie the beef tenderloin in several places with kitchen twine to hold its shape. (My new favorite butcher is DeBragga and Spitler, founded in New York City in the 1920s and currently operating out of Jersey City. This supplier of fine restaurants will ship prime meats to your door.) Season with salt and pepper. Heat the olive oil in a large nonstick pan over medium. Swirl around the pan to coat with the oil. Sear the beef, including its ends. Remove from heat and let cool while you prepare the prosciutto.

/ PROSCIUTTO AND PASTRY PREPARATION /

Cut a piece of plastic wrap long enough to cover the beef when rolled around it. Shingle the prosciutto on the plastic, forming a rectangle large enough to surround the tenderloin. Cover the prosciutto with the duxelles, spreading evenly. Remove the twine from the beef and rub with the mustard.

Place the beef at one end of the prosciutto rectangle and use the plastic wrap to snugly roll the beef in the prosciutto. Tuck in the ends and refrigerate for about half an hour.

Roll out the puff pastry on a lightly floured surface to about a quarter inch thick. If you require two sheets to surround the log, press them together, wetting slightly along the end.

/ ASSEMBLY /

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Remove the beef from the refrigerator and from the plastic wrap. Place the beef in the pastry's center. Fold the pastry over lengthwise, and brush with an egg wash to seal. Cut excess pastry from the ends before folding up to seal, as you would when wrapping a gift box. Again, use egg wash to seal. Place seam side down on a baking sheet.

Brush the pastry with the egg wash and slit in several spots with a sharp paring knife to release steam when in the oven. Bake for about 40 minutes. The pastry should be golden brown and the temperature 125 degrees. Remove the beef from the oven and let rest for about 10 minutes.

/ SAUCE PREPARATION /

While the Wellington is resting, heat the butter in a saucepan over high heat. When foaming, add the Cognac. Also add the beef stock and bring to a boil. Turn down to a simmer until the liquid is thickened and reduced by more than half. Place in a gravy boat, allowing guests to drizzle over their beef as desired.

/ SERVING /

Cut the Wellington into slices about 1 ½ inches thick. For sides, I enjoy either mashed or smashed potatoes and a green such as Swiss Chard. Bon appétit and be well.



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