

Brig Highland Beef Cottage Pie



Why is it that when you add a layer of mashed potato to anything it immediately becomes fantastically comforting and warming? Nothing beats it in winter months. In our house the more likely it is to stick to your ribs, the better the dish. My son adores his with lots of butter and lots of pepper and warm milk to make it extra creamy. Unfortunately this also brings added calories and fat, so I tend to split the pot and mix my half with mashed carrots for added flavour and goodness. That's the other wonderful thing about mashed potato; they are hugely versatile and can be adapted easily to suit all tastes.

And as a topping on pies you can't beat it. I much prefer potato to pastry and it would seem I'm not alone! Cottage Pie, Shepherd's Pie and Fish Pie are amongst our own nation's favourites but you'll find similar meals the world over. Let's be honest; left over beef and a potato crust is both cheap and nutritious so of course it's going to be universally popular. In Australia it's Potato Pie, New Zealand its potato top pie and in North America you'll find Chinese Pie or cowboy pie. Even the French, with all of their culinary skills have a similar dish called Hachis Parmentier. Being beef lovers down at Brig, we've gone for Cottage Pie. Our Highland Beef's distinct flavour and texture works wonderfully in cottage pie, making it rich and meaty. And because Highland Beef is naturally lower in fat, you don't get a greasy layer on the bottom of your dish. Just piping hot, delicious mince.

The recipe is a traditional one, using peas and carrots and I've stuck to creamy mash as the topping. The great thing here though is that you can vary this to suit your own tastes or veg basket. Mix parsnips or carrot mash through the potato or add mature grated cheddar and mustard to give a pub lunch kick. My favourite variation is a layer of mashed neep in between the beef and the topping; it brings a moist sweetness that is just perfect during cold winter months.

So experiment away! Cottage Pie has been recorded as early as 1791 – so I'm sure anything you do to change it won't be the first time!

This has been proving so popular as a special in our Café that we've added it as a permanent dish when our new menu starts next week.

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Ingredients

2 tbsp rapeseed oil
1 onion, finely chopped
1 large carrot, chopped chunky
500g Brig Highland Beef mince
300ml hot beef stock
1 – 2 table spoons Worcestershire sauce
½ cup of frozen peas
500g floury potatoes – Kerr's Pinks or Maris Pipers are best
25gms farmshop butter
3 tbs warmed milk
Salt and Pepper to season

Method

Preheat the oven to 180C/fan160C/gas 4.

Heat the oil in a large pan over a medium heat. Add the onion and cook until clear – about 5 minutes. Add the mince, turn up the heat slightly and stir until browned. Pour in the hot beef stock and Worcestershire sauce. Bring to the boil, then cover and reduce to a simmer for 20 minutes.

While the mince is cooking, cut the potatoes into medium-size chunks and put into a large pan of cold salted water. Bring to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes, or until tender. Drain and return to the pan. Mash well with the warm milk and butter. Season to taste and set to one side.

Uncover the mince, add the peas and cook for a further 5-10 minutes, until most of the liquid is absorbed. Season, then spoon into an ovenproof dish.

Spoon the mash onto the mince. Rough up with a fork and add a few knobs of butter. Bake for 25 minutes, until the mash is golden and crisp. Serve piping hot with crusty bread. YUM!