

Delectable *Daube*

In a *New York Times* article dated December 29, 1907, readers learned the secrets behind making *Daube d'Italienne* according to a recipe from the restaurant made famous by Madame Begué in New Orleans. The restaurant's namesake had died the previous year and operations were taken over by her daughter and son-in-law, the Anouilles.



Madame Begué



Daube d'Italienne

"Lard a nice piece of beef," the recipe stated, "about three inches thick with strips of fat ham and pieces of mashed garlic." Louisiana colonial cooks routinely used hog lard and bear fat for their flour-based thickening agent (or *roux*). Then "brown the meat thoroughly on both sides," adding both "carrots and onions, and enough water to cover the whole." The suggested seasonings were "salt, pepper, cloves, bay leaf and parsley." After putting this over the fire early "in the morning" and cooking "slowly without interruption at least eight hours"

(and with a few other steps), one was to serve the meat that evening over macaroni along with "a good sprinkling of grated Italian cheese". *Daube* with spaghetti and red gravy was once offered with some regularity at a number of neighborhood New Orleans restaurants.

What actually is this *daube* (dəʊb, or dohb) New Orleanians rave about? It is one of the great winter meals in the Crescent City and a superb example of how French and Italian cuisines masterfully merge in this culinary capital. Most food dictionaries describe the dish as a classic French beef stew with vegetables and seasonings braised slowly in red wine for many hours. Every French region, such as Provence, has its own unique version, sometimes prepared in a special, very deep, covered pottery casserole called a *daubière*.



Daube Provençal, braised in wine, carrots and herbes de Provence

Daube comes into the language in the early eighteenth century from the French via the Italian *dobba* by way of the Catalan *la adoba* for "stewed" (with a Germanic origin meaning "to strike").

This "larded" roast beef dish can also be stuffed with salt pork slivers

and cooked in broth and wine (or sherry) until tender. Inserting garlic proves equally tasty. But very often *daube* in the typical New Orleans household can simply be a beef roast slowly cooked in red gravy until falling apart and served with spaghetti. And although often utilizing a less tender or inexpensive cut of meat, *daube* is regularly found on Christmas tables in South Louisiana or as an entrée in the *Réveillon* feast. Chef John Folse (in his *daube* recipe) substitutes veal eye-of-the-round roast for beef shoulder roast.

John Besh suggests short ribs. Various cuts of beef work well (including the rump, round, chuck or shoulder), but today “larding” is a contemporary *faux pas* in executing this spoon-tender and flavorful recipe. Olive oil seems to be the healthy alternative.



Large antique French copper daubière

Today's home cooks heat this oil in a Dutch oven or heavy pot and brown the roast well on all sides. In the same oil, they *sauté* the onion, bell pepper and celery (“Trinity”) and add to their red gravy. This traditionally rustic stew would be wonderful with its slices stacked onto a base of *sautéed* gnocchi, but most homes will opt for spaghetti. Some will simmer, serve and savor leftover *daube* and gravy on a genuine New Orleans po-boy (made with real French bread, New Orleans style or from a Vietnamese bakery).

Daube becomes *daube glacée* with the addition of gelatin, a popular

form of food preservation in the era before refrigeration. The *daube glacée* is prepared from the round roast (just like *daube*), braised but with the addition of gelatinous substances. This concoction is refrigerated in its stock to form chilled, jellied meat, which (when sliced thin and served on crackers or toast points) is an excellent cousin to hogshead cheese. *Daube glacée* was listed on the menu of Corinne Dunbar's, a New Orleans restaurant operated from 1935 to 1987 in a private residence. "*Louisiana: A Guide To The State by the Federal Writers' Project*" described *daube glacée* as "jellied veal made with pig's and calf's feet."



Daube glacée served at Southern Food and Beverage Museum

Martha Stewart has commented that this "New Orleans classic made from slowly braised beef, red wine, vegetables, spices, and gelatin" would be ideal served with "cornichons and Garlic Mayonnaise."

If one wants a commercial version of this product, Langenstein's has a fine *daube glacée* available in its stores. This all dates back to a New Orleans tradition as early as 1840 with a Creole holiday feast including *daube glacée* accompanied by quail on toast, quince jelly, roast turkey with cornbread dressing, *soufflé* potatoes and French Burgundy.

P.S. Since penning this article ten years ago, this author has participated in a wonderful instructional class at the Southern Food and Beverage Museum (SOFAB) in which the subject covered was the preparation of hogshead cheese (both New Orleans and Cajun style recipes), as well as *daube glacée*.

Daniel Robert, our chef and instructor, was born and raised in the family-owned meat processing business started in 1918 by his great grandfather. He, too, has a wealth of experience and a Masters degree in Meat Sciences.



Daniel Robert instructs his class on daube glacée at SOFAB.

For his *daube glacée*, he uses boneless beef rump or veal, and obtains his gelatinous mixture by boiling pig's feet, which can be acquired from the Hong Kong Market on the West Bank. The meat is gently pulsed in a food processor, and various ingredients such as granulated garlic,

beef bouillon, dried parsley and hot sauce are added before removing from the stockpot and chilling in the refrigerator. Also added is Knox Gelatin for "insurance".

As a sumptuous entrée in your Creole Réveillon feast to an afternoon lunch offering both pleasing to the eye and to the palate, *daube glacée* is indeed an attractive and delectable option.

Chef Daniel Robert's description says it all: "Plenty Good!"

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Delectable *Daube*"
Ned Hémard
Copyright 2009 and 2019