

Bigos – Hunter’s Stew

**As made by Tom Bahder for the Huntsville Archery Club’s 2008 New Years Eve Party,
held at the Custom Archery Center, 11599 SW. Memorial Parkway, Huntsville, AL 35803**

This is a very old traditional Polish dish, said to be made by hunters, who needed an easy and simple way to cook their meat after a hunt. Traditionally, the stew is made from sauerkraut, sausage, meat and wild mushrooms. It was originally made with meats such as wild boar, elk, venison and peacock, or whatever the hunters would catch and wild mushrooms from the forest.

This recipe is made with sauerkraut, pork, Polish sausage, bacon, ham, mushrooms (shitake and champignon), tomatoes, onion, apple, wine, salt and pepper.

4 lbs. sauerkraut, preferably old world style or kosher style
2 lbs. pork meat, cut into small cubes
2 lbs. Polish kielbasa (smoked) sausage, cut into cubes
1 lb. sliced smoked bacon, cut into cubes
1 lb. smoked ham (can be country ham), cut into cubes
32 oz. can of chopped stewed tomatoes
1 medium sized onion, coarsely chopped
2 cups of dried prunes, with seeds removed and coarsely chopped
2 apples, peeled and chopped coarsely
2 lbs. fresh champignon mushrooms, sliced
2 cups dried Shitake mushrooms
1 cup of dry red wine
1 stick (¼ lb.) unsalted butter
2 bay leaves
1 Tablespoon black pepper freshly ground
Salt
2 cups water

Rinse the sauerkraut with cold water to remove some of its salt. In a large cooking pot with a thick-iron-clad bottom, put in the 2 cups of water, and combine the sauerkraut, pork, Polish sausage, bacon, ham, stewed tomatoes, onion, prunes, red wine, dried shitake mushrooms, apples, and bay leaves. Cook for about 1 hour on medium or low heat. Frequently stir from the bottom to prevent sticking to the bottom of the pot. After one hour of cooking, add the ground pepper.

In a cast iron skillet melt the stick of butter, and then add the sliced champignon mushrooms. Fry the mushrooms on medium to high heat, stirring frequently. Add a fair amount of salt to taste. Fry the mushrooms until they start to turn slightly golden brown. (They should not get crisp.) Remove from heat.

After cooking the stew about 1 hour, add the fried champignon mushrooms to the stew. Cook the stew for another hour, for a total cooking time of 2 hours. Stew can be eaten immediately. It is very good reheated a number of times, and can also be frozen for about a month in the freezer.