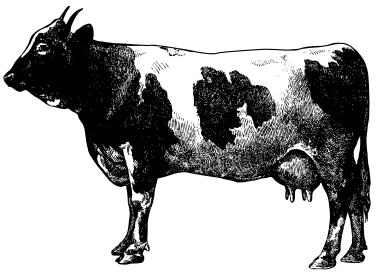
Fillet of Beef Prince Albert



Serves 6

- 3 tbsp sunflower oil
- 1 medium onion, peeled and sliced
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 celery sticks, thinly sliced
- 1kg centre cut beef fillet, well trimmed
- 75g pack smooth duck liver pate (parfait)
- ½ tsp truffle oil (optional)
- 6-8 thick rashers rindless streaky bacon
- 3-4 bay leaves
- 100ml Cognac
- 200ml Madeira
- 150ml fresh beef stock
- flaked sea salt and fresh ground black pepper

FOOD FACTS

- A number of fruit and vegetables were named after Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. These include the Lane's Prince Albert apple, which was grown in Hertfordshire and was originally known as Victoria and Albert, in honour of the royal couple's visit there in 1841. By the 1880s it was a popular garden apple and was also planted commercially. It eventually fell out of favour for commercial growers as it bruises easily. It does still appeal to present day amateur growers and is an award-winning cooking apple.

Historical facts provided by Monica Askay, Cook and Food Historian

① Heat 2 tbsp of the oil in a non-stick frying pan and fry the onion, garlic, carrots and celery for 10 minutes until softened and lightly browned, stirring. You may need to increase the heat towards the end of the cooking time to encourage the vegetables to brown.

② While the vegetables are cooking, prepare the beef. Put the beef fillet on a board and cut down the length of it with a sharp knife. Start and finish 2cm in from each end, slicing halfway through the meat but no further, to make a pocket for the stuffing.

③ Take the duck parfait and cut into 1.5cm wide strips. Place the parfait down the centre of the beef and dribble with the truffle oil if using. Close the sides to enclose the filling. Season the beef all over with flaked sea salt and plenty of ground black pepper.

④ Wrap the beef in the bacon. This will help keep it moist as it cooks and add flavour to the sauce. Tie the bacon in place with kitchen string, popping a bay leaf between the bacon and string every other rasher. (Tying will also help to keep the stuffing safely inside.) Set aside.

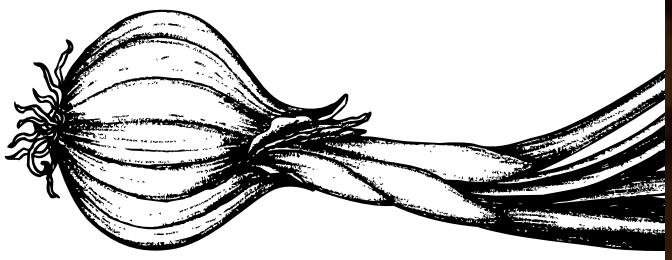
⑤ Preheat the oven to 200C/fan oven 180C/Gas 6. Tip the sautéed vegetables into a medium flameproof casserole or Dutch oven, long enough to take the beef in one piece. Return the frying pan to a medium-high heat and add the remaining oil.

⑥ Season the outside of the joint with a little more pepper then brown in the frying pan for 10 minutes or until the bacon is nicely crisp and the fat is golden. Place the beef fillet on the vegetables.

⑦ Spoon off all but 2-3 tbsp of fat from the frying pan and stir in the flour. Slowly add the Cognac, stirring constantly. As soon as it is bubbling, add the Madeira followed by the beef stock. Bring the liquid to a simmer then pour immediately around the beef. Cook uncovered in the centre of the oven for 30-35 minutes for rare beef, 40 minutes for medium rare.

⑧ Lift the beef onto a board and cover with a piece of foil and a couple of clean, dry tea towels to help retain the heat. Return the casserole to the hob and simmer for 2-3 minutes until the liquid thickens a little more. Strain through a fine sieve into a warmed jug.

⑨ Carve the beef into thick steaks. (Either discard the bacon or eat it with the beef.) Pour a little of the sauce into six deep plates – make sure they have been warmed in the oven first – and top with the beef. Garnish with fresh parsley and serve with creamed potatoes and green beans. (Alternatively, put creamed potatoes and beans on the plates and top with beef. Pour over a little sauce and serve.) The vegetables that the beef is cooked with are intended to flavour the sauce but can be scattered over the beef if you wish.



FOOD FACTS

- Prince Albert also had several desserts named after him, including an Albert Cake (a type of traybake containing currants), Albert Pudding (a steamed pudding containing sultanas and candied citrus peel) and Coburg Pudding (sliced baked apples with an apricot jam and creamy topping).
- Domestic cattle have been important in Britain since prehistoric times. "Beef" comes from the Norman word "boeuf". And following the Norman Conquest, the social divide between victorious Normans and vanquished Saxons could be seen in the name given to cheap cuts of beef. Ox cheek and ox tongue are derived from "saxon" and are terms still used today.
- Before mechanisation and the development of the range and modern cooker, meat was roasted on a spit in front of an open fire. The spit was turned by a scullion (a kitchen boy) or by a small dog running in a drum to the side of the fireplace.

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