



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

TOPCHEFS REVEAL THEIR SECRETS



*For me, there's no time like Passover for serving brisket, when it's a mandatory star at my seder table. Growing up, our brisket was braised in with onion soup mix and canned potatoes. These days, I cook from scratch, and my tradition now incorporates the Asian influence of my adopted home of Sydney. The result? A four-hour braising of grass-fed wagyu brisket in Chinese masterstock – an aromatic comfort dish that'll blow away your dinner guests. For a Sephardic-friendly Pesach, I've swapped wheat-free tamari for soy and sherry for shaoxing. If you're Ashkenazi, seek out imitation soy, or, better yet, enjoy it any other time of year.*

Brooklyn-born Michael Shafran is a professional food writer based in Sydney, and founder of Australia's crowdsourced cookbook, The Melting Pot.

*A masterstock is meant to be reused, and can last for years, if not decades – some in China are rumoured to be more than 100 years old. So once you make this dish, feel free to finely strain the liquid, discarding any solids, and place it in the freezer. The next time you want to use it, replenish it with water, a new batch of stock ingredients (relative to the amount of liquid you add) and bring it to the boil for a few minutes before using to kill any potential bacteria. The stock then gets more and more complex each time you use it. The only other rule is to use it for the same kind of meat, so if you start using it for beef, only reuse it for beef.*

#### Ingredients:

1 kg / 2 pound piece of brisket (preferably wagyu), halved, trimmed of excess fat

3L water  
3 black cardamom pods, cracked open  
6 pieces of cassia bark or 2 cinnamon stick  
1 tsp cloves  
1-2 dried chillies (optional)  
1 tsp fennel seeds  
1 tsp Sichuan pepper (optional)  
4 star anise

375 ml tamari or imitation soy sauce  
375 ml medium-dry or pale dry sherry

1 large knob ginger (about 30g), sliced  
4 garlic cloves, peeled  
3 green onions (scallions), roughly chopped  
3 pieces dried mandarin or orange peel

200g Chinese rock sugar

1 tablespoon vegetable or olive oil

## SLOW-BRAISED BRISKET IN CHINESE MASTERSTOCK

1. Preheat oven to 160C / 320F.
2. To make the masterstock, fill a stockpot with the water.
3. Place the cardamom, cassia bark, cloves, chillies, fennel, Sichuan pepper and star anise into a muslin cloth (cheesecloth), and tie with kitchen string to close.
4. Add to the water, along with the tamari, sherry, ginger, garlic, green onion, mandarin peel and sugar.
5. Bring to the boil, then reduce to a low simmer and cook for 30 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly and infuse further.
6. Meanwhile, heat the oil over medium-high heat in a large casserole dish (or a frying pan and then transfer to a baking dish or roasting pan; separate into two dishes if needed). Brown one brisket half in the dish for several minutes on each side until browned, do the same to the sides, then repeat with the other half.
7. Bring masterstock back to a low boil, then add to the casserole dish (or the baking/roasting dish, if using) with both halves of brisket. Cover with a lid (or tightly with foil) and place in the oven.
8. Braise for 2 hours, then turn both pieces over and swap places. Cook for 2 hours further.

Serves 8. Remove from oven, then remove brisket and set aside to rest. When ready, slice into thick (about 2cm / 1 inch) lengthways slices against the grain. Serve with a little of the masterstock for gravy. (Strain the remaining gravy and store in the freezer to use for another day.)

## ROASTED BEET SALAD WITH MINT

1. Chop roasted beets into bite-sized pieces and place them in a salad bowl.
2. Whisk together the vinegar, oil, sugar, cumin and salt. Pour dressing over the beets, then add 3 tbsp minced mint.
3. Toss salad gently till beets are coated in the dressing and mint.
4. Sprinkle the last tablespoon of mint over the top of the salad.

Serves 8. This salad can be made ahead, but the mint must be added right before serving, otherwise the beet juices will turn the mint red. If you are preparing this salad gluten free, make sure you use a certified gluten free balsamic vinegar.



Tori Avey is a food writer, recipe developer, and the creator of two cooking websites: The Shiksa in the Kitchen and The History Kitchen.

She explores the story behind the food—why we eat what we eat, how the foods of different cultures have evolved, and how yesterday's food can inspire us in the kitchen today.

## INGREDIENTS

2 lbs (about 6 medium) roasted red beets, skins removed  
3 tbsp balsamic vinegar  
2 tbsp olive oil  
2 tsp Tsugaru  
1/4 tsp cumin  
1/4 tsp salt (or more to taste)  
1/4 cup fresh chopped mint

The flavors in this salad really pop; the freshness of the mint is a lovely counterpoint to the earthy sweetness of the roasted beets. It is a versatile side dish that will compliment a variety of dishes. The sweet, robust flavor pairs particularly well with goat cheese and cheese sauces, smoked fish, nuts and lentils.