

Beef

There are two things to remember when cooking beef. Firstly, always trim off any fat before cooking braising or stewing steak or before eating grilled steak. Secondly, always buy the leanest mince available and pre-fry it in a non-stick pan, discarding any fat that cooks out. Follow these rules and you will automatically reduce any beef dish's calories and fat units.

Beef and Pasta Casserole

The condensed soup used in this simple recipe will already be seasoned so there is no need to add extra salt and pepper. If the stewing steak you buy is not very lean, get a little extra so that you end up with 450g/1lb after all the fat has been discarded. This recipe freezes well.

450g/1lb lean stewing steak

225g/8oz carrots

298g/10½oz can condensed oxtail soup

225ml/8floz water

115g/4oz small pasta shapes or macaroni

Discard all visible fat from the meat and cut the lean into bite-sized cubes. Peel and slice the carrots. Place the meat and carrots in a casserole dish. Mix the soup with the water and add to the dish. Cover and cook at 150°C/300°F/gas mark 2 for 2½ hours. Stir in the pasta, making sure it is submerged in the liquid, and cook for another 30 minutes.

Serves 4/	fat	grams
per portion	cals.	units
white pasta	310	5
wholemeal pasta	300	5

Meat Loaf with Blue Cheese

A meat loaf is a very useful basic dish to add to your maintenance menus. It can be served hot with vegetables (jacket potatoes and broccoli are particularly good) or cold with salad. The cheese makes this loaf extra tasty, but if you are not fond of blue cheese you could substitute Leicester or Double Gloucester instead. This recipe freezes well.

450g/1lb very lean ground or minced beef

115g/4oz mushrooms

50g/2oz onion

1 egg, size 3

50g/2oz fresh wholemeal breadcrumbs

45ml/3 level tablespoons tomato ketchup

5ml/1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

Salt and pepper

75g/3oz Danish Blue cheese

Line a 450g/1lb loaf tin with foil. Finely chop the mushrooms and onion. If you have a food processor use it to chop them, if not do it by hand. Lightly beat the egg. Mix all

the ingredients except the cheese together and season well with salt and pepper. Place half the mixture in the loaf tin and level the top. Grate the cheese and place on top of the meat. Cover with the remaining meat mixture. Cover with foil and bake at 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 for 1 hour. Turn out and serve hot or cold.

Serves 4/325 calories

5 fat units/2.1 grams fibre per portion

Bobotie

This South African national dish consists of a curried meat and fruit mixture topped with a savoury custard.

40g/1½oz bread

250ml/9floz skimmed milk

450g/1lb very lean ground or minced beef

1 medium onion

1 medium cooking apple

20ml/4 level teaspoons curry powder

10ml/2 level teaspoons apricot jam

30ml/2 level tablespoons sultanas or raisins

15ml/1 tablespoon lemon juice

Salt and pepper

2 bay leaves

2 eggs, size 3

Place the bread in a bowl with 115ml/4floz milk and leave to soak. Brown the mince in a non-stick pan and drain off and discard the fat. Finely chop the onion. Peel, core and chop the apple. Add the onion, apple, curry powder, jam, sultanas and lemon juice to the meat. Stir in the bread and milk and season with salt and pepper. Mix well and turn into an ovenproof dish. Lay the bay leaves on top. Cover and cook at 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 for 1 hour. Discard the bay leaves. Beat the eggs with the remaining milk and season with salt and pepper. Pour over the meat and return to the oven uncovered. Cook for another 30 minutes.

Serves 4/305 calories

3 fat units/1.8 grams fibre per portion

Beef and Spinach Bake

Spinach is a good source of fibre and makes this beef bake extra filling. Serve it hot with extra vegetables — potatoes mashed with a little skimmed milk would be good. This recipe freezes well.

350g/12oz frozen chopped spinach

350g/12oz very lean mince or ground beef

15ml/1 level tablespoon flour

115g/4oz mushrooms

5ml/1 level teaspoon mixed dried herbs

15ml/1 level tablespoon tomato purée

115g/4oz cottage cheese with chives and onion

150g/5oz carton low-fat natural yoghurt

*Salt and pepper
115g/4oz Lancashire cheese*

Cook the spinach as directed. Place in a sieve and press back of a spoon to squeeze water. Brown the mince in a non-stick pan and drain off and discard the fat. Mix the flour into the mince. Slice the small or chop roughly if large meat with the spinach, herbs, cottage cheese and yoghurt, salt and pepper and turn into a dish. Level the top. Cover and cook at 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 for 15 minutes. Crumble the cheese on top. Cook uncovered for 10 minutes. Brown the top under a

Serves 4/315 calories
5 fat units/6 grams fibre per portion

Cheesey Mince Cobbler

You can use ready-grated cheese in this recipe if you wish, or buy a wheel and grate it yourself. The cheesy topping to this beef casserole makes a substantial and economical meal.

450g/1lb lean minced or ground beef

15ml/1 level tablespoon flour

1 medium onion

225g/8oz can tomatoes

1 beef stock cube

150ml/¼ pint boiling water

Salt and pepper

115g/4oz self-raising flour

2.5ml/½ level teaspoon baking powder

2.5ml/½ level teaspoon dry mustard

25g/1oz butter or margarine

25g/1oz Parmesan cheese

25g/1oz mature Cheddar cheese

2.5ml/½ teaspoon mixed dried herbs

60ml-90ml/4-6 tablespoons skimmed milk

Brown the minced beef in a non-stick pan, then drain off all the fat. Mix the flour and turn into a casserole dish. Finely chop the onion and roughly chop the tomatoes. Add to the meat with the stock cube. Dissolve the stock cube in the water and then pour into the casserole dish. Season and stir to mix. Cover and cook at 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5 for 1½ hours. Sieve together the flour, dry mustard and a pinch of salt. Rub in the butter or margarine and cheese until the mixture is like breadcrumbs. Add enough milk to make a soft dough. Knead very lightly for a few minutes until smooth, then place on a floured surface and pat into a square 5in x 5in casserole dish. Cut into 8 squares and place in the casserole dish. Bake, uncovered, for another 10 minutes.

Serves 4/405 calories
5.5 fat units/1.8 grams fibre per portion