

Syrah is often served with rich beef short ribs, mild sausage, lamb dishes and meat braised with dried fruit — like currants, prunes and raisins — and aromatic spices such as cinnamon, cumin and Chinese five-spice powder. The dark juicy fruit, spice and generally moderate tannins play to the dried fruit and spice in the dish. The dried herb and loamy soil notes found in several of this week's Napa Valley Syrahs pull mushroom, eggplant and dark olives into the matching realm.

A red wine can be served with tomato-influenced dishes: pizza topped with tomatoes or marinara sauce, red-sauced pastas and tomato-y meat stews. These dishes are often the bailiwick for red-fruited, high-acid Sangiovese. Syrahs with acidity, however, can also handle the love apple.

Medium-rare, well-seasoned sirloin steak is a slam-dunk with most red wine, but Beef with Tomato-Demi Sauce adds some different twists that make it appropriate to serve with Syrah.

Heirloom tomatoes are coming into peak season. At other times of the year and for a more economical option, canned tomatoes can substitute, though you may need to increase the amount of onion and carrot or include a pinch of sugar to balance canned tomatoes' oft-tart acidity. Unless you grow your own or have access to a home-grown bounty, it is generally better to use a good brand of canned tomatoes instead of hothouse tomatoes, which have less flavor.

The tart but sweet, balanced tomato is offset by Syrah's dark fruit and complemented by the wine's herb notes. No matter how ripe and lovely tomatoes can be on their own, they need additional flavors to successfully venture into Syrah territory. Beef with Tomato-Demi Sauce incorporates veal demi-glace as a major ingredient that gives depth and richness to the sauce. Anchovy adds a touch more savory umami and provides a counterpoint to the vegetal sweetness of onion and carrot.

The wine's spice notes are supported by a subtle amalgam of spices: cumin, star anise and bay leaf. Instead of using butter or roux for thickening, a small amount of grated russet potato does the job nicely.

The Tomato-Demi Sauce sans beef would also be good as a less tomatoey pasta sauce or could be thinned with broth to make soup. Syrah is a fine pairing for

## Beef with Tomato-Demi Sauce

Serve 4-6

Heirloom tomatoes have wonderful flavor that contributes mightily to salads and sauces. The color of this sauce will vary a bit, depending on the color of your tomatoes. For a different presentation, cube the meat, season to taste and quickly brown in a skillet over high heat. Reheat meat in the sauce just before serving. Serve with noodles and sauteed kale.

- 1½ pounds heirloom tomatoes, peeled and seeded (see Notes)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ medium carrot, small dice, about ¼ cup
- ½ medium yellow onion, small dice, about ½ cup
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ cup dry, red wine
- 1 small sprig thyme
- 1 small star anise
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 parsley stems
- 1 anchovy fillet, rinsed and chopped
- ¼ cup grated small Russet potato (see Notes)
- 1 cup veal demi-glace (see Notes)
- Generous ¼ teaspoon Dijon mustard or to taste
- 2 pounds top sirloin or flap meat (see Notes)
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- Chopped parsley (optional garnish)

**Instructions:** Reserve one ½-inch slice of tomato, then coarsely chop the rest and set aside; keep any tomato juices.

Add olive oil to a medium-size nonreactive skillet over medium heat. Add carrot and cook for 2 minutes. Add onion and cook 2-3 minutes more, stirring occasionally until onion begins to get translucent. Add garlic and cumin; briefly cook until aromatic. Deglaze skillet with red wine; cook until almost dry then add the coarsely chopped tomatoes and any collected juices. Add thyme sprig, star anise, bay leaf, parsley stems, anchovy and grated potato. Reduce heat to medi-

um-low; stir occasionally until tomatoes have broken down and potato is cooked, about 5-7 minutes. Taste and remove star anise before it becomes too strong. Add demi-glace and mustard and simmer until flavors meld, about 3-5 minutes. Remove and discard thyme sprig, bay leaf and parsley stems and star anise.

Allow sauce to cool a bit, then puree in a blender until smooth. Be careful — if too hot, the sauce may splatter out of the blender. Taste and adjust seasoning. The sauce can be made a day ahead and reheated.

Season meat well with salt and pepper and grill or broil to desired doneness.

Coarsely chop remaining tomato slice.

**To serve:** Thinly slice the steak and serve topped with the sauce. Garnish with the chopped tomato and parsley, if desired. Alternatively, the sauce can be served on the side.

**Notes:** To more easily peel tomatoes, cut a small "x" on the bottom, opposite the stem end. Drop tomato into boiling water for a few seconds, then remove and let cool slightly. Slip off the skins and remove the core. Cut in half horizontally and gently squeeze out the seeds.

Shelf-stable demi-glace can be found in well-stocked culinary stores. Reconstitute according to package directions. Some stores make their own demi-glace, which is usually found in the freezer section.

Flap meat, also known as bavette, is available at specialty butchers.

**Per serving:** 315 calories, 36 g protein, 9 g carbohydrate, 13 g fat (4 g saturated), 100 mg cholesterol, 168 mg sodium, 2 g fiber.

many dishes that contain tomatoes; with sufficient acidity and moderate tannins and alcohol, it's flexible enough even for dishes with vegetarian leanings.

For more Syrah-friendly pairings, see

the links with this article at [sfgate.com](http://sfgate.com).

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