NEAPOLITAN SUNDAY SAUCE

Preparation Time: 45 minutes

Cooking Time: 6+ hours

Serves: 6–8 people

Ingredients

- **2.2 lbs veal stew meat** (cut into large chunks)
- **6 pork ribs** (tracchiulelle)
- **2 medium onions**, finely sliced
- **8½ cups tomato passata** (puréed tomatoes)
- **1 tablespoon tomato paste**
- **¾ cup extra virgin olive oil**
- **1 cup red wine**, preferably from Gragnano
- **A few fresh basil leaves**
- **Salt**, to taste

Preparation

Step 1: Sear the Meat with Onions

1. In a **wide, shallow clay pot** (or a heavy-bottomed pan), heat the olive oil and add the **thinly sliced onions** and all the meat (veal and ribs) **at the same time**.
2. Let the onions and meat **cook together slowly**, stirring constantly with a **wooden spoon**.
3. The onions must become very soft—almost melt away—without burning, while the meat forms a **dark golden crust**.
4. As the oil dries, **deglaze with red wine** in small splashes, always stirring to prevent sticking and enhance the flavor.

Step 2: Add Tomato and Simmer

1. Once the meat is beautifully browned and the onions have almost disappeared, **melt the tomato paste** into the pan and stir until well incorporated.
2. Pour in the **8½ cups of tomato purée**. Season with salt and add a few **fresh basil leaves**.
3. Bring to a gentle bubble, then reduce the heat to very low.

Step 3: Let it "Pippiare"

1. The ragù must now **"pippiare"**—a Neapolitan word that describes the gentle, rhythmic bubbling sound of the sauce.
2. Cover the pot **partially**, and let the sauce simmer slowly for **at least 3 hours**, though **6 hours is ideal**.
3. Stir occasionally with a wooden spoon to make sure it does not stick to the bottom. The sauce should thicken, deepen in color, and become intensely flavorful.

How to Serve

- **As a primo (first course):** Toss the sauce with **rigatoni or ziti** and top with grated **Parmesan or pecorino cheese**.
- **As a secondo (second course):** Serve the meat separately with a side of bread or vegetables.
- **For special occasions:** Use this ragù as the **base for Neapolitan Lasagna**, especially during **Carnival**.

Tips from Tradition

- **Cook it the day before:** Like many great sauces, ragù tastes even better the next day.
- **Use a clay pot and wooden spoon:** This respects the tradition and affects both flavor and texture.
- **Never rush:** Ragù is not a quick meal—it's a Sunday ritual, a family anchor, a dish that tells a story in every bite.