

Chipped Beef on Toast

with Cured Beef and Spinach

★ S E R V E S 4 ★

This was one of my childhood favorites. I remember my mom making it when I was very young; I'd eat the salty dried beef straight out of the bag and drive my mother crazy. I hadn't thought about it for years until we were on a visit to relatives one recent summer and my aunt made it again for my kids. I was excited by the nostalgia and the simplicity and by how comforting it was. As I watched my Aunt Karen thicken milk with a slurry of cornstarch and water, I realized that this was a white gravy with sliced cured beef over toast. So I gussied it up with good bresaola (salted and cured beef from northern Italy), paired it with some crusty bread and some vinegary greens, and fell in love with it all over again. ★ C.G.

4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter
4 slices good-quality French bread
White Gravy (recipe follows)
8 ounces bresaola or other cured beef, sliced
2 tablespoons canola oil
2 cloves garlic, sliced
1 shallot, minced
4 cups loosely packed fresh spinach leaves
1 teaspoon sherry vinegar

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Melt the butter in a small sauce pan. Brush the sliced bread with the butter, place it on a baking sheet, and bake until the bread is golden brown, flipping the bread once during cooking, about 10 minutes.

In a medium sauce pan, gently rewarm the white gravy over medium heat, adding water or milk to loosen as necessary. Stir in the bresaola. Keep warm until ready to serve.

Heat the oil in a medium sauté pan over medium heat. Add the garlic and shallots and cook just until translucent, about 2 minutes. Add the spinach and quickly sauté until just wilted, about 40 seconds. Remove the pan from the heat. Add the vinegar to the wilted spinach and toss.

To serve, place 1 slice of toast on each of 4 plates. Ladle the bresaola and gravy over each toast slice, followed by a spoonful of spinach on top of the sauce, and serve immediately. Any leftover bresaola in gravy may be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 3 days. The sauce may need a splash of whole milk when being reheated.

Continued

White Gravy **Makes about 5 cups**

Gravy is to Kansas what tomato sauce is to Italy. Add some sausage or chipped beef to this base, and we'll put it on everything: chicken, biscuits, fried steaks, toast, you name it! If you make the base right, everything else is easy. It's best to make the gravy a day ahead and refrigerate it overnight to let the flavors meld. This recipe makes plenty of gravy, so you can serve it alongside any breakfast item—it's the perfect excuse to linger at the kitchen table, talking and dipping. ★ C.G.

8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter
½ cup minced shallots
4 medium cloves garlic, smashed and minced or pressed through garlic press
⅓ cup plus 2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour
4 cups whole milk
2 dried bay leaves
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Melt the butter in a medium sauce pan over medium heat until foaming, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the shallots and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until translucent, about 4 minutes. Add the flour and cook, stirring constantly, until you get a little blond color, about 4 minutes. Gradually whisk in the milk and add the bay leaves. Bring the mixture to a boil over medium-high heat and then lower to a simmer for about 10 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Decrease the heat to low and simmer for 10 minutes, or until thickened, whisking occasionally. Whisk in the Parmesan and discard the bay leaves. For best results, let the gravy cool, then refrigerate overnight in an airtight container. Rewarm gently before using, adding a little water or milk to loosen as necessary.