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Question: Why Does It Take So Long To Make a Pot Roast or Stew?

Answer: A good stew or pot roast has a rich depth of flavour and meat so tender it melts in your mouth. This result is achieved with a long slow simmer that takes advantage of flavorful cuts of tough meat.

Why does it take so long? Most stews call for using a tougher cut of beef coming from the part of the animal which is exercised more, resulting in increased flavour but also strong muscle fibers. When using a common stewing beef such as a chuck roast it is necessary to cook the dish slowly in order to ensure the breaking down of these muscle fibers. The tenderizing process is necessary when using these cuts of meat. The fat and collagen from the muscle connective tissues start breaking down and melting when liquid is added and heat is used but the longer the meat is cooked at a high temperature the tougher the muscles fibers become. Thus simmering the meat in liquid on a low heat with patience is the balancing act required to achieve tender stew meat.

Stew recipes often call for the meat to be seared initially, not to keep in juices, but to caramelize the beef thus adding to the flavour profile of the dish.

When using more tender cuts of beef in a stew dish, such as the tenderloin, the meat should be cooked quickly, usually sautéed, and then later added to a sauce created separately, such as in Beef Stroganoff.

We Can Help! is a weekly column from ATCO Blue Flame Kitchen. Do you have a cooking or household question you'd like the ATCO Blue Flame Kitchen Answer Line to help you with? Call us toll-free at 1-877-420-9090 Monday to Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., or send us an email at bfkanswerline@atcogas.com. For our searchable database of kitchen-tested recipes, along with household tips and expert advice, visit our website at www.atcoblueflamekitchen.com