



## Beef Wellington



There's something wonderfully retro about the notion of beef Wellington. It puts us in mind of formal dinners at Downton Abbey or seventies dinner parties with the hostess floating around in a kaftan. Named after the man who crushed Napoleon at Waterloo, the very notion of preparing beef Wellington casts fear into the hearts of the most competent of home cooks. Perhaps that's why so many chefs like to cook it at home for their private celebrations, in a subtle display of one-upmanship. You'll find more chefs eating beef Wellington than turkey on Christmas Day, that's for sure. But we'll wager that even they don't make their own puff pastry. Our version doesn't include foie gras (it just seems de trop) and it isn't that difficult. Really.

### Ingredients

- ♦ 20 g dried porcini mushrooms
- ♦ 100g butter
- ♦ 4 shallots, finely chopped
- ♦ 600 g chestnut mushrooms, chopped
- ♦ leaves from 2 sprigs of thyme
- ♦ 400 ml Madeira
- ♦ 4 tablespoons double cream
- ♦ 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or Irish rapeseed oil
- ♦ 1 kg centre-cut beef fillet
- ♦ 500 g all-butter puff pastry
- ♦ 1 egg, beaten

Serves 6

### To Cook

Preheat the oven, and a baking sheet, to 200° C/fan 180° C/gas mark 6. Soak the porcini in 150 ml boiling water for 20 minutes, then squeeze out and chop finely, reserving the soaking water. Melt the butter in a frying pan over medium heat and cook the shallots until pale gold, then add the mushrooms, porcini and thyme and cook until softened. Pour in the Madeira, season, turn up the heat and cook until the wine has evaporated. Take off the heat and scoop the mixture into a bowl. Mix in the double cream, taste for seasoning, and set aside. This is your mushroom duxelle. Heat the oil in a pan over a high heat and, when it is smoking, add the fillet and sear briefly on all sides until crusted. Season well and allow to cool. Roll out the pastry to a rectangle big enough to envelop the meat. Brush the pastry all over with most of the beaten egg, and then spread with the duxelle mixture. Put the beef at one end and carefully roll it up in the pastry. Stand the pastry-enveloped beef seam side down, and then trim the edges and tuck in to seal the parcel, pressing the edges together. Brush with the remainder of the beaten egg. Put on to the hot baking sheet and cook for about 35–40 minutes, or until a meat thermometer reads 45° C for very rare or 60° C for medium and the pastry is golden. Set aside to rest for 5 minutes before serving.