

Pinochet's Pie

Serves 6

The crust for this beef pot pie is very similar to a dumpling or cobbler topping. The beef mixture is poured into the baking dish, then the batter is dropped onto the top, by the spoonful, prior to baking.

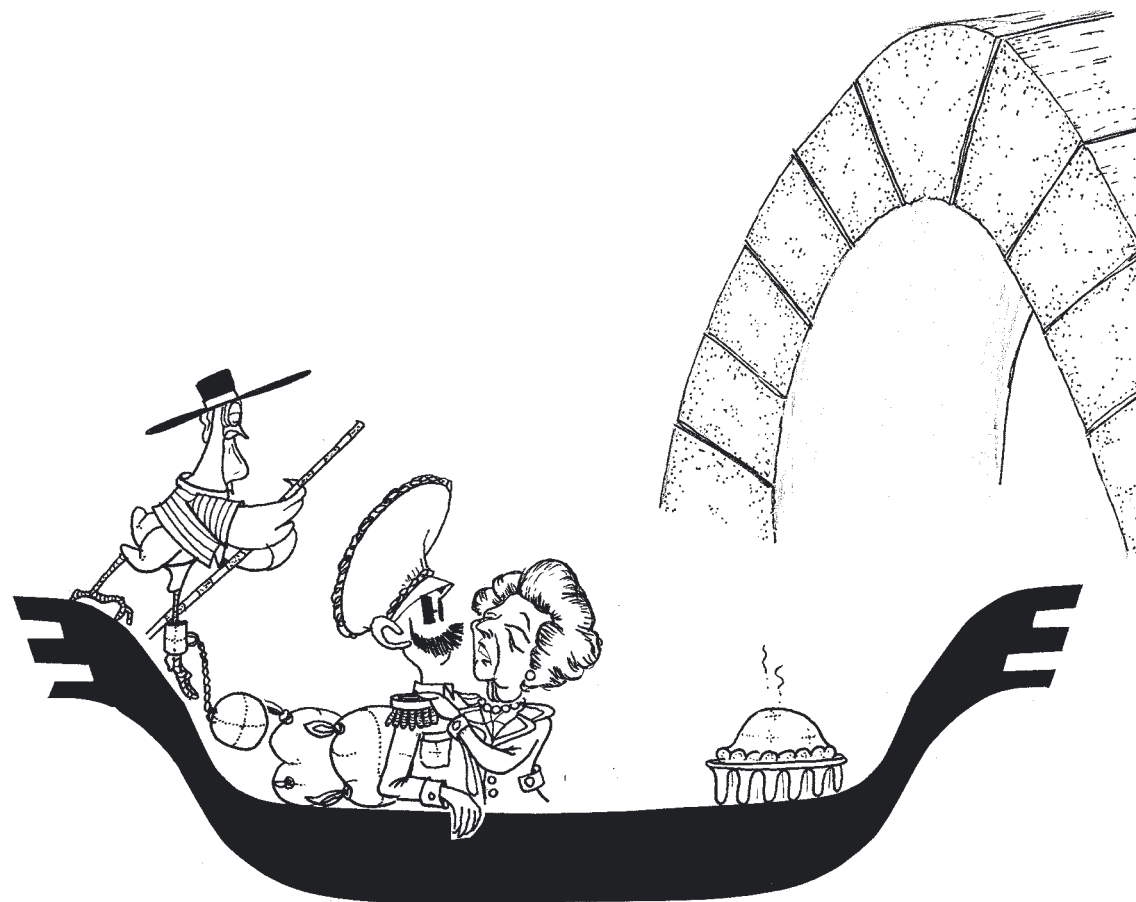
Beef Pie Filling

- ½ cup chopped onion
- 3 cloves garlic, sliced finely
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups beef, cut into ½-inch pieces (a stewing beef cut works well)
- 1 cup carrots, sliced into ¼-inch slices
- 1 cup diced potatoes (peel can be left on for a more robust texture)
- 2 cups beef stock
- Red wine to cover (about 3 cups)
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon salt (omit if using stock cubes)
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ cup frozen peas

Crust

- ¼ cup butter
- 1½ cups plain flour
- 1 cup grated mild cheddar cheese
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1½ cups milk

Preheat oven to 475°F / 220°C



Gifts—Giving and Receiving

The giving and receiving of gifts in many countries is one of the most anxiety-inducing and socially treacherous processes one can imagine. In a dictatorship, a gift is never just a gift. It may be a way of cementing a relationship (read long-term mineral contract) or a way of encouraging Health and Safety and child labor inspectors to bypass certain factories on the country's beautiful river banks.

Giving Gifts

A dictatorship is a particularly well-structured environment in terms of the giving of gifts. The palace does, rather helpfully, tend to issue lists of suggested gift items. Other than those that are in a hard currency, one should try to manage the general tastefulness of the gift. The more esoteric gifts may come back to haunt one on eBay. Never enquire after or attempt to view a gift previously given. It may have been melted down or sold for hard currency (on eBay).

Receiving Gifts

The receipt of gifts involves a standard process that should be followed at all times. All gifts should be followed up with a note, on company or country letterhead, thanking His Excellency, Eminence, Royal Highness, Imperial Highness, Generalissimo, etc., etc., ad nauseam effusively (but vaguely) on his generosity and kindness, within 14 days of receipt. Notes should ideally be typed or wordprocessed—handwritten notes may come back to haunt one (on eBay)—and the signature block should be utterly illegible.

The gift of an adorable new endangered species cub, chick, or hatchling should be cooed over with delight and then promptly reported to the nearest out-of-country chapter of the International Society for the Protection of Endangered

Wildlife. The bi-weekly diplomatic or corporate courier pouch is an excellent way of transporting the little bundle of fur, feathers, or scales safely out of the country. Light sedation is recommended—even the most lax of customs officials will find themselves forced to enquire about a wriggling courier pouch.

Non-living gifts, such as the shrunken head of the charming former Finance Minister, should be received gravely (but vaguely). A less effusive thank-you note is the appropriate response.

Remember, all gifts, irrespective of which international humanitarian, wildlife, health and safety, currency, and/or child labor laws they violate, must be displayed prominently at all times during one's tenure in a dictatorship. It is impossible to tell which servants are in one's full employ versus perhaps working in alternative employment for the government's brutally efficient Secret Service. As for the general rules of good taste and interior design—during one's tenure in a dictatorship, these rules must be forsaken in the spirit of international cooperation (and long-term mineral contracts).

