Oxtails Braised in Red Wine-from "Pintxos" by Gerald Hirigoyen (Ten Speed Press, 2009)

Piperade and Boccadillos, owned by Chef Gerald Hirigoyen, are wonderful Basque restaurants in San Francisco. His small plate dishes (tapas) are exquisite examples of Spanish and Basque tradition. This recipe is actually two parts: braising the oxtails in a succulent red wine sauce and creating a log of the cooked oxtails that are then prepared for a lovely plate presentation. Here, I offer the first part; if you want the second part, either buy Pintxos" or email me. (It's a lovely presentation) and I will send you part II.

Serves 2-3: Prepare over two days.

¼ cup olive oil
2 pounds grass-fed beef oxtails, cut cross-wise into 2 " pieces
Sea salt and fresh ground pepper
1 medium onion, chopped
1 carrot, chopped
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 (750-ml) bottle dry red wine
Bouquet Garni of 1 bay leaf, 6 sprigs of thyme and 6-8 sprigs of parsley wrapped in a cheese clothe sachet
½ head garlic
2-inch piece fresh ginger
2 Tablespoons black peppercorns
2 cups high quality stock: chicken, veal (or enough to cover oxtails in casserole)

1. Adjust an oven rack to the center position and pre- heat the oven to 325 degrees. (Chef Hirigoyen cooks at 350 but I like cooking lower head for a bit longer with grass-fed beef.)

2. Liberally season the oxtails with salt and pepper. Heat casserole over high heat until hot. When the oil just starts to ripple, brown half of the meat until deeply colored on all sides, using tongs to lean the ribs against each other for balance. Move to a plate. Brown the rest of the oxtails.

3. Decrease the heat to medium. Add the onions, carrots, and celery. Sauté until soft and the onions become translucent, 6 to 7 minutes. Return the meat to the casserole and add the wine, bouquet garni, garlic, ginger and peppercorns. Increase the heat back to high, bring to a boil and cook for about 6 minutes until liquid is reduced by half. Add the stock and some additional salt and return to boil. (Stock should cover meat). Cover casserole, and place in oven for about 3 hours (2 hours if you cook at 350), or until the meat is fork tender.

4. Remove the Dutch oven from the oven. Using tongs, transfer the oxtails to a large plate, removing excess vegetables and herbs that may cling to the meat. Discard any loose bones, fat and gristle that may have fallen away from the meat. Strain the braising liquid through a large sieve into a bowl, pressing out the liquid from the solids. Cover the oxtails and liquid separately with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. (If serving oxtails the same day, place the liquid in a glass bowl or large measuring cup and spoon off excess fat. It is best to let the liquid rest for at least 30 minutes to allow most of the fat to rise to the surface.)

6. Serving: spoon off and discard the solidified fat from the braising liquid. Add the liquid to the clean Dutch oven and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Briskly simmer until the sauce is reduced to one cup. Add oxtail meat back to sauce and gently reheat. Serve with polenta or a crusty bread; (if you are doing grains); and a lovely green such as kale or chard. Braised onions or leeks would also be nice. A Ribero del Duera or any Tempranillo grape wine would pair nicely.