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February's Tasty Recipe List

The theme for February is Snow Fun. The following recipe is provided for you to make early in the morning in your slow cooker. All day you can play while your meal is cooking. Visit www.take-it-outside.org for event listings, outdoor activities describing seasonal & natural events, a new recommended reading list each month, and much more!

Hearty Beef Stew (in slow cooker)

- 4 teaspoons oil, divided
- 2 pounds bottom round, trimmed of fat and cut into 1-inch cubes
- ¾ pound sliced cremini or white button mushrooms
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups brown ale or dark beer
- 4 large carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 ½ tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon caraway seeds
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 bay leaf

Heat 2 teaspoons oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add half the beef and brown on all sides, turning frequently, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a 6-quart slow cooker. Drain any fat from the pan. Add the remaining 2 teaspoons oil and brown the remaining beef. Transfer to the slow cooker.

Return the skillet to medium heat, add mushrooms and cook, stirring often, until they give off their liquid and it evaporates to a glaze, 5 to 7 minutes. Sprinkle flour over the mushrooms; cook undisturbed for 10 seconds, then stir and cook for 30 seconds more. Pour in ale (or beer); bring to a boil, whisking constantly to reduce foaming, until thickened and bubbling, about 3 minutes. Transfer the mushroom mixture to the slow cooker.

Add carrots, onion, garlic, mustard, caraway seeds, salt, pepper and bay leaf to the slow cooker. Stir to combine.

Put the lid on and cook on low until the beef is very tender, about 8 hours. Discard the bay leaf before serving.