

'21' Club's Steak Diane

Serves 2

As one might expect, every captain at '21" prepares Steak Diane slightly differently. They use varied amounts of the ingredients -- more or less mustard, Worcestershire, or A-1 steak sauce, for example. The beef can be browned first then removed from the pan while the sauce is made. Or vice versa. No matter. As they do it - - with drama and finesse -- a large copper pan with brandy flaming and sauce bubbling, it is not only a great show, but very delicious. It will be a great show in your own kitchen or dining room, too.

1 16-ounce boneless shell steak (also called New York strip steak, short loin, or sirloin strip)

Salt

Freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) unsalted butter (divided)

3 tablespoons finely minced shallot

6 tablespoons Cognac (or other good brandy) (divided)

2 tablespoons dry white wine or dry vermouth

2 teaspoons Dijon mustard (preferably imported)

2 tablespoons A-1 steak sauce

1/2 cup beef broth

2 tablespoons heavy cream

2 tablespoons finely snipped chives

Trim all the outside fat off the steak. The steak should now weight about 12 ounces.

Cut the steak in half horizontally, creating two 6-ounce steaks. Pound the steaks lightly to flatten them to 1/4-inch thick. Season them liberally on both sides with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Heat a 12-inch skillet until a drop of water dances on the surface. Add 1 tablespoon of the butter. As soon as the foam subsides, add the seasoned meat. Cook on each side for 1 minute. Remove to a plate.

Immediately adjust the heat under the pan to low. Add the second tablespoon of butter and the shallots. Sauté the shallots for 1 minute.

Increase the heat to high. Add 3 tablespoons of the cognac and flambé, if desired. Add the white wine and with a wooden spoon scrape up any browning in the pan (deglaze the pan). Stir in the mustard and A-1 sauce. Cook for about a minute, or until the liquid is reduced to a syrup.

Add the broth and continue to boil for about a minute, until reduced to a few tablespoons. Add the cream and stir well to incorporate. Boil a few seconds. Taste for seasoning and add freshly ground pepper to taste.

Add the cognac and ignite.

When the flames die down, stir in the chives, taste for salt and pepper and adjust if necessary.

Add the reserved steaks and their juices (that have accumulated on the plate) to the simmering sauce. Turn the steaks in the sauce a couple of times, as the sauce reduces a little more.

Place the steaks on individual plates. Divide the sauce on the steaks.

Serve with mashed potatoes or rice, or at least bread to mop up the sauce.