**Cottage Pie**

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| **Ingredients:**  1 to 1 1/2 lbs. ground beef  (TheLadyinRed used 1lb. of ground beef as it was easier to purchase.  You can also use a combination of ground beef and ground pork.) 1 bag of frozen mixed vegetables 1 lb. 8oz. of red potatoes (That's about enough to fill up a 9"x13" casserole dish 3/4 of the way.) 1 stick butter 4 cups beef stock 6 slices whole grain bread (You can substitute wheat bread.) 2 garlic cloves (crushed or sliced roughly) 1/4 cup flour (or Wondra) (TheLadyinRed prefers to use Wondra - less lumps in gravy.) 1 tsp. salt 1/4 tsp. pepper 1/4 tsp. garlic powder (optional) 3/4 cup whole milk additional salt & pepper to taste | **Special Notes:**   Grated Parmesan or cheddar cheese is a nice addition to add to the top before baking.  Serves 6. |

**Instructions:**  
  
1.  Cut the potatoes into cubes.  Leave the skin on.  Place them in a large pot and fill the pot with water.  Salt the water and bring it to a boil.  Boil the potatoes for approximately 15 minutes, until a fork pierces them with little resistance.  
  
2.  While the potatoes are cooking, toast all 6 slices of bread while the potatoes are boiling.  You want the bread to be toasted until it’s brittle, the texture of croutons.   Place the bread aside to cool.

3.  In a medium saucepan, place the frozen mixed vegetables and 3 cups of beef stock.  Bring it to a boil, and then reduce it to a simmer.  Reserve 1 cup of the beef stock to add later.

4.  While the broth is simmering with the vegetables and the potatoes are boiling, sauté the ground beef with 2 crushed (or sliced) garlic cloves and a dash of salt and pepper.  
  
5. When the meat is browned, take it off the heat and place it to the side.  
  
6.  Check on the potatoes, and when they are fork tender, drain them, but do not rinse them.

7.  In the same pot that the potatoes were just in, melt the stick of butter and add 3/4 cup milk..  Bring it to just about the boiling point.  
  
8.  Add the potatoes back into the pot with a 1 tsp. salt, 1/4 tsp. pepper, and 1/4 tsp. garlic powder.  
  
9.  Mash, mash, mash!

10.  When the vegetables and stock are boiling, take the reserved 1 cup of beef stock and whisk in 1/4 cup flour (or Wondra) until smooth.  Take the mixture and add it to the boiling stock and vegetables.  This will thicken the stock into a gravy.  Simmer for 5 minutes and remove from heat.  
  
11.  Preheat the oven to 425°.  
  
12.  Break up the toast into 1" pieces and line the casserole dish with them.

13.  Layer the ground beef on top of the toast bits.  
  
14.  Top the beef with the vegetables and gravy.  
  
15.  Scoop the creamy, fluffy mashed potatoes onto the top of the dish and spread evenly.  
  
16.  Bake it in the oven for 15 - 20 minutes until the soft peaks of the potatoes start to brown.

17.  Let the dish rest for about 15 minutes so when you slice into it, the layers stay stacked upon serving.