tuscan square roast

M yields 6-8 servings

In the weeks before teaching in Tuscany for the first time, I dreamed about the food, the ingredients, and the flavors that I would encounter. I surrounded myself with all things Italian. I wandered the streets of Arthur Avenue in the Bronx, the aisles of Eataly in New York, the shelves of travel books in Barnes and Noble. Then Shabbos came and I needed to cook a roast. Inspired by Italian fare, I developed this recipe, which has become a family favorite. The lightness of the ingredients allows the meat to shine without being masked by heavy wine flavors that sometimes dominate roasts.

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

3 pounds square roast or California roast

1 (12-ounce) jar marinated artichoke hearts, rinsed well and drained

1 (16-ounce) jar sweet red pepper slices, rinsed well and drained

24 fresh basil leaves

8 fresh garlic cloves, roughly chopped

1 medium onion, peeled, roughly chopped

10 ounces (about 30-35) cherry tomatoes, stems discarded

1 teaspoon dried basil

1 teaspoon dried oregano

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup tomato paste

½ cup white wine, such as Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the meat; sear for 4-6 minutes per side, until nicely browned. Using tongs, remove the meat to a plate or cutting board.

To the pot, add drained artichokes, red peppers, fresh basil, garlic, onion, tomatoes, dried basil, oregano, and pepper. Sauté for 5 minutes; stirring occasionally, until fragrant, scraping up the browned bits from the bottom of the pot. Return the meat to the pot. Add water to come halfway up on the roast.

In a small bowl, stir together tomato paste and wine. Pour over the meat. Cover the pot. Turn the heat to low; simmer, covered, for 3 hours.

Allow meat to cool. Transfer to a cutting board; slice against the grain, using a serrated knife. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the vegetables to a platter. Arrange the meat in the center. Return the heat to high; reduce the juices for 5-6 minutes to concentrate the flavor. Drizzle the roast with pan juices.