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ULTIMATE SHEPHERD'S PIE

For the roast beef:

- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. each cayenne and black pepper
- 1/4 tsp. each dried thyme, oregano
- 1 lean boneless beef chuck or sirloin roast, 2 to 2 1/2 lbs.
- 1/2 of a large onion, sliced
- Tomato juice

For the filling:

- 2 tbsp. oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 3 carrots, cut into 1/4-inch dice
- Salt, pepper
- 1/4 tsp. dried thyme
- 3 tbsp. flour mixed with 1/4 cup water
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 cup frozen or canned corn
- 4 cups mashed potatoes prepared with butter, milk and salt

For the roast, combine oil and seasonings and rub all over the roast in a microwave-safe casserole dish. (If you have time, heat the oil until warm before adding the spices, and let steep overnight). Top the roast with the onion slices. Add enough tomato juice to almost cover the meat. Cover the casserole with a lid (a plate will do, but don't use plastic wrap) and microwave on high power for 10 minutes, then on 50 percent power for 15 minutes per pound. Let stand for 10 minutes before removing lid. Remove roast from pan, reserving liquid. Dice meat into 1/2-inch cubes.

Meanwhile, prepare mashed potatoes.

For the filling: Heat oil in a large, heavy skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and onions and sauté until they begin to soften. Add diced meat and carrots and season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook until carrots are almost tender, stirring occasionally and adding more oil if necessary. Stir in thyme.

Measure cooking liquid and add enough water to equal 3 cups. Stir into mixture in skillet. Increase heat to high and slowly stir in flour mixture. Simmer about 5 minutes, until slightly thickened. Stir in peas and corn and cook for 1 minute longer, until vegetables are warmed through. Season again with salt and pepper.

Turn mixture into a 9-by-11-inch baking pan. Cover filling with mashed potatoes. Bake at 375 degrees for about 30 minutes, until filling is bubbly and potatoes begin to brown. Makes 6 servings.