

Mourad–Wolfert Braised Lamb Shank

This is certainly a slow food: a slow braise of lamb shanks. It takes a bit of time but it is also a perfect dish to make ahead. This is an adaptation from a combination of two recipes from two cookbooks: Mourad Lahlou's *Mourad: New Moroccan* for Lamb Shanks (and Spiced Prunes and Brown Butter Farro) and the other from Paula Wolfert's *Mostly Mediterranean* recipe for Lamb Tagine with Pumpkin and Chickpeas. Mourad's preparation is more haute cuisine akin to his signature restaurant dish. So I took the basis of cooking the lamb with his method and added the accompanying chickpeas and vegetables from Wolfert's tagine to make it more like a meal one would have at home. This goes very well with Peay *La Bruma* Estate Syrah.

Ingredients:

6 lamb foreshanks (1 pound each), trimmed and "Frenched"	1 cinnamon stick
Kosher salt	1 teaspoon saffron threads
8 cups coarsely chopped onions	8 to 10 cups chicken stock or water
1/4 cup sliced garlic	1/4 cup honey
3/4 cup grapeseed or canola oil, plus more for browning the lamb	1/2 pound dried chickpeas soaked overnight in water to cover and then drained
1/4 cup ground coriander	2 pounds pumpkin or butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cubed into 1.5" pieces
1 1/2 tablespoons ground ginger	1 pound carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch lengths
1 tablespoon ground cumin	4 tablespoons unsalted butter, for the braising-liquid sauce
2 teaspoons ground black pepper	1 teaspoon finely chopped parsley, for the braising-liquid sauce
2 teaspoons ground turmeric	
4 cloves	
6 allspice berries	

To Prepare:

1. Optional but recommended: Put a cooling rack on a baking sheet lined with paper towels. Salt the lamb shanks with kosher salt on all sides and put on the rack. Cover with a damp towel and refrigerate overnight.
2. Preheat the oven to 350. Place a large heavy roasting pan over medium heat for several minutes. Add a film of oil then add the shanks in a single layer. Brown the lamb evenly on all sides for about 12 minutes, adjusting the heat as necessary. Transfer the shanks to the baking sheet and pour off any fat remaining in the pan.
3. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, toss the onions and garlic with the oil. Add the onion mixture to the pan and cook, stirring constantly, over medium heat, until the onions are an even golden brown; adjust the heat as necessary. Increase the heat to high, add 2 tablespoons salt and the ground coriander, ginger, cumin, black pepper and turmeric and saffron threads and cook for about 2 minutes, stirring constantly, to bring out the flavors of the spices.
4. Nestle the shanks, smoother side down, in the onions and cook for 2 to 3 minutes. Turn the shanks over. The side with the most connective tissue should be facing down; the meat will be more tender cooked this way. Add enough stock to come three-quarters of the way up the shanks and bring to a simmer. Cover stock with a piece of parchment paper, brushed with water to keep the edges from curling up, and cover the pan tightly with aluminum foil. Put it in the oven and cook for 45 minutes. Lift the foil cover and the parchment paper then stir in the soaked and drained chickpeas. Re-cover the pan with the parchment and foil and continue to cook for 2 hours or until the meat is completely tender.
5. Lower heat oven to 200F. Carefully remove the shanks from the braising liquid, place them meaty side up on a baking sheet, cover with aluminum foil and transfer the shanks to the oven to keep them warm.
6. In a large saucepan, pour the braising liquid with the onions. Let sit for about 5 minutes, then ladle off the fat that has risen to the top and discard. To the braising liquid add the pumpkin cubes and carrots. Bring to a boil and simmer gently for about 15 minutes until the vegetables are tender.
7. With a slotted spoon remove the vegetables and add to the lamb. Increase the heat and reduce until the sauce reduces to 5 to 6 cups. If the flavor seems weak, continue to reduce it to intensify the flavor. Season the sauce with salt and pepper. Blend in the butter, preferably with an immersion blender, and stir in the parsley. Serve the lamb shank with the vegetables with the sauce on top. Or you can pull the meat off the bone and serve without the bone if you prefer.

A nice accompaniment is farro cooked in chicken stock or lightly salted water. Place 1 cup farro in a pot and add salt and enough water or stock to cover (about 3 cups). Bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low and simmer 30-40 minutes. Drain off any excess water.

Note: Paula Wolfert would have you parboil the soaked chickpeas for 5 minutes and remove the skins. This extremely laborious "slow food" step I tried and found unnecessary. She would assert that the chickpea skins feel and taste unpleasant. Having tried it both ways I found no discernable difference that made it worth this time consuming effort. And if you want to skip this "slow food" step entirely, you can add a can of drained and rinsed chickpeas at the very end of the cooking of the pumpkin and carrots in the braise liquid.