



Stags' Leap

RECIPE: ROBERT'S BUTTERFLIED LEG OF LAMB

Serves: Four to Six, with leftovers for sandwiches

Day One

Start with a lamb you're acquainted with personally, one that's been raised humanely, without hormones or additives. If you don't know anyone in your local 4H, a reputable butcher can supply quality free range organic lamb. In the afternoon, open a bottle of Petite Syrah. Pour yourself a glass, then gather the ingredients.

You'll need:

Friend or friends to assist with drinking the wine

Mortar & Pestle

Sharp boning knife (unless your butcher has butterflied the lamb for you)

Glass Baking dish for marinating meat

Barbeque (charcoal is preferable to gas)

Ingredients:

2 bottles of Stags' Leap Petite Syrah (one for the marinade the day before, one for the following day with the barbeque)

Leg of Lamb (butterflied)

1/2 T fresh Basil

2 T fresh Rosemary (plus additional for scattering over the coals)

1/2 T ground Cinnamon or whole Cardamom seeds

whole dried Bay leaves (for scattering over the coals)

5-6 cloves Garlic

3 T Fresh Ground Pepper

Sea Salt

3 1/2 T Extra Virgin Olive Oil (plus 1/2 cup for baking dish/basting liquid)



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6 T horseradish-based (Dijon style) mustard

Have a sip of wine. Wash your hands; you're going to be using them.

To butterfly the lamb, ask your butcher to do it for you, or, if you must, after trimming the lamb, on the side where the bone is closest to the surface, cut down to the bone. Some recipes call for the bone to be cut out entirely, but this is a bone-in recipe. Cut around the side of the bone, releasing the meat enough that you can pull it out as flat as possible on either side of the bone, hence the butterfly wings. Slit through any thicker areas in the same direction as the bone to help them lie flat. Butterflying rearranges the meat into a wider, thinner piece, allowing it to cook in less time. Trim out any exposed fat, and the meat closest to the shank (the narrow end) which contains tough white tendons. Use any trimmings for stock on another day, or hand this off to your friendly assistant.

Crush the basil, rosemary, 4 cloves of the garlic, pepper, and cinnamon (try cardamom sometime, too) with a mortar and pestle, add olive oil and grind it all into a paste. This is a magic process; put your muscle and heart into it. Refer to your glass of wine occasionally, to remind yourself of the recreational and cultural goal of your endeavors. Put some music on. Do a little dance shuffle in your kitchen. It helps.

Lay the lamb bone side down on a clean surface and make slits across the back for rubbing in the herbal paste. Spoon the paste over the lamb and begin working it in with your hands. When you're satisfied that alchemy is beginning to take place, paint the lamb with the mustard, using your hands (friend will now have to hold your wine glass for you, potentially a pleasant moment if you've chosen the right friend).

Take the remaining clove or so of garlic, slice it thin, mix into the 1/2 cup of olive oil and what remains in your glass of the wine, hopefully a couple of tablespoonfuls. Pour a portion of this mixture into the baking dish, lay the lamb bone side down, spooning the



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remainder of the mixture on the top. Cover the dish, and refrigerate overnight, turning and basting once or twice during the evening. Finish the wine. Play a game of dominoes; take a stroll in the moonlight; practice that aria you've been working on so hard.

Day Two

Next afternoon, open your second bottle. Take the lamb out of the refrigerator. Start the barbeque. You don't have to start a gas barbeque as early, but this recipe is better with charcoal, allowing the use of aromatic herbs and woods to flavor the smoke. Make any arrangements for side dishes (a salad of dark greens, spinach, walnuts, bleu cheese, and crushed mint, and a pot of rice, perhaps cooked in the stock). When the coals have flamed and settled down to a medium hot level, the lamb should be at room temperature. Drain and save the liquid for basting.

Lay the lamb on the grill, bone-side down, for fifteen minutes, basting, sipping. Flip the meat to the other side for five minutes, sipping, basting. Then scatter your infusions over the coals: rosemary, bay, your own secret herbs or wood chips. Put the lid on and continue to cook until the thickest part of the meat is medium rare (135 degrees Fahrenheit on a meat thermometer). It'll only take ten minutes because butterflies are just that fast. There will be time for a quick hand of Black Jack, or sitting for a spell in a chair and taking in the twilight scene on the edge of your outdoors, preferably facing some awesome feature of nature. Take the lamb off the grill and let it stand until it cools down, fifteen minutes or so. Slice thin. Season with sea salt and freshly ground pepper.

Gather your household from their various pursuits to the table—the gamesters, the dancer, the opera singer, the child from her perch in front of the fire, and your famished friend. Fill glasses with what remains in the bottle, acknowledge your blessings, take a deep breath, and lift that first morsel of lamb infused with the smoke of herbs to your lips, followed by a long considered sip of the Petite Syrah. This is one of those wines that fills the mouth and the spirit, and is liable to lead to a sensation of well-being and generalized excitement and contentment, so sit back and attend to the magic at hand.



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