

Braised lamb shanks in orange and red wine with creamy mash

You can get Spring lamb as early as Easter but I think it's developed a much better flavour by the Autumn. I could eat slow-cooked lamb shanks almost any time and any way. This really is my desert island food!

Ingredients (serves 6)

- 6 lamb shanks
- S&P, cooking oil, butter
- 3 medium onions – cut into 6 wedges
- ½ head garlic
- handful of thyme and rosemary (plus 6 sprigs of rosemary for garnish)
- 6 bay leaves (fresh if possible)
- 3 oranges – juice and peeled zest
- 1 bottle of full-bodied red wine
- 1 litre chicken stock
- 1 tsp brown sugar
- 3 carrots – cut into 1” chunks
- 3 celery sticks – cut into 1” chunks
- Plus creamy mash (made with Gruyere) to serve

Alternatives

- 6 button onions & 3 leeks can be used instead of medium onions.
- Mushrooms can be added if available but then don't add orange juice or zest.
- Root veg can be used but watch it doesn't disintegrate (so do not use potato).
- A can of tinned tomatoes can also be added.

Method

- Season the shanks, gently fry in oil and butter for 10 mins until brown.
- Discard any excess fat, add more butter, then onions, garlic, herbs and bay leaves, and sweat for another 5 minutes without colouring.
- Return the shanks, add the orange juice and zest, wine, stock and sugar.
- Cook very gently for 1½ - 2 hours.
- Add carrots and celery and cook for a further 45mins - 1 hour (they'll become tasteless if added earlier).
- Strain liquor into pan, reserving the veg, herbs and shanks.
- Skim off fat - it's easier to do this if it's a bit cooler.
- Bring liquor to the boil, skim off impurities and reduce by half to form sauce.
- Reduce a further cupful to a glossy syrup, brush onto shanks.

Assembly

- Gently reheat shanks, vegetables, mash and reduced liquor.
- Place shanks on top of mash (bone up), place veg to the side (½ onion, 1 bay, ½ carrot, ½ celery stick etc), spoon sauce around dish neatly, garnish with a sprig of uncooked rosemary.

Recommended wine

Although Rioja is a natural choice with roasted lamb, as is Chianti, I think there's only one true contender, and that's a good bottle of Cotes du Rhone.

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