

ROSEMARY-BRAISED LAMB SHANKS

This is based on a recipe from Bofinger, which claims to be the oldest restaurant in Paris. I was working with a group of French musicians who took me there for dinner. The food was incredible and the atmosphere took you back in time. I kept looking over my shoulder to see if Henri Toulouse-Latrec was in the house. I suggest you serve this over mashed potatoes or polenta. I resisted including my recipe for mashed potatoes after receiving threats from the American Heart Association.

- 1 ½ Tbsp. Olive oil
- 4 lamb shanks (about 3½ pounds)
- 2 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 onions, chopped
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 3 large cloves of garlic, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 4 cups rich chicken stock*
- 1 cup water
- 2 large fresh sprigs rosemary or 1 teaspoon dry
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Wrap herbs in cheesecloth and tie with a piece of string or place them in a small muslin bag. Heat oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Brown shanks on all sides and transfer to a plate. Add carrots, onions and celery to Dutch oven and sauté until soft and starting to brown. Add wine and boil until all liquid evaporates. Add tomato paste and garlic. Cook for a minute (be careful not to burn the tomato paste). Add lamb, stock, water, and herbs. Cover and bake for about 1½ hours or until the meat is tender.

Remove lamb. Boil cooking liquid for 35 minutes until thickened to a sauce consistency. Season with salt and pepper. Discard herbs. Return lamb to sauce. (At this point, you can let this cool to room temperature, refrigerate overnight, then remove the hardened fat that settles on top, before reheating.)

Another option, is to strain the sauce, and press the solids through a fine sieve before adding the lamb.

*** RICH CHICKEN STOCK**

Rich chicken stock comes from using the bony parts of chickens that have been browned. I save the bones and drippings from roasted chickens in my freezer until I have enough to make stock. You can also get wings and backs from the butcher and roast them at 400 degrees with carrots, onions and celery for about 1 to 1½ hours until every thing has a nice brown color to it. Place bones and drippings, or wings, backs and vegetables in a stock pot and cover with water. Bring to a boil then reduce heat, partially cover the pot, and simmer (a few bubbles rising to the top) on very low heat for several hours or overnight. Strain stock, and refrigerate. Remove fat that hardens on top, then bring to a boil and simmer until it reduces to half. I make this in large batches and freeze it. It makes the best gravy and sauces you'll ever taste.