

LAMB AND SAUSAGE CASSOULET

Every winter I make a rich, decadent cassoulet at least once. This classic French dish filled with pork, duck confit, sausage, and beans is so hearty and filling that a big pot can feed the entire neighborhood. I make it all from scratch with a little help from my husband. He confits the duck legs and I basically do the rest.

This year, I wanted to try something new, so I decided to try a version with lamb. I might even like this one better. It's a bit less time-consuming and fatty without the duck confit. Now all I have to do is pull out that big Cabernet I've been saving and invite the gang over.

(NOTE: If you happen to have a Polish deli nearby, ask for the smokiest sausage they have instead of using supermarket kielbasa. Also, I use a mix of RANCHO GORDO Christmas Lima Beans and Flageolet Beans—available online—but any good dried white bean will work. Most supermarkets have Great Northern or Cannellini beans as good substitutes.)

INGREDIENTS

SPICE MIXTURE (Combine all dry spices and store in jar)

1 tsp salt

1 tsp pepper

1 tsp onion powder

1 tsp garlic powder

1 tsp smoked paprika

1 tsp fennel seeds

1 tsp red pepper flakes

FOR CASSOULET

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound dried Rancho Gordo Christmas lima beans

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound dried Rancho Gordo Flageolet beans

4 strips of bacon

2 tbsp olive oil

1.5 pounds lamb shoulder, cubed

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour

kosher salt & pepper

1 onion, chopped

2 carrots, sliced

3 stalks celery, chopped

6 cloves garlic, minced

1 stalk rosemary

3 bay leaves

2 Tablespoons spice mixture

8 ounces kielbasa, cubed

8 ounces Saucisson de Paris à l'Ail, cubed (garlic sausage)

14 ounces crushed tomatoes

4 cups chicken broth

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup brandy or bourbon

1 cup panko

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Parmesan, grated

PREPARATION

Soak beans overnight in water. In the morning, drain, add to pot and fill with water 2" above beans. Bring to a boil and then down to a simmer for 40 minutes to one hour. Run under cold water, then drain well and set aside. *(Note: Christmas Limas Beans cook faster than other big beans. If you use something else, you might want to simmer it for 1 hour. Beans are ready when al dente. They will continue to cook in cassoulet.)*

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Heat a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat on the stovetop. Render 4 strips of bacon. Once cooked, remove the bacon strips onto a paper towel and set aside. When cool, crumble the bacon into small pieces and set aside.

Add 2 tablespoons of oil to the Dutch oven and swirl to coat. Season lamb with salt and pepper and dredge in flour. Add lamb and sear for 2 minutes on each side until brown. Remove meat and set aside. Add onion, carrots, celery, and garlic to the Dutch oven, stirring frequently, for about 2 minutes. Add a splash of oil if too dry. Add 2 tablespoons of the spice mixture to the vegetables and stir for 30 seconds. Add in lamb, bacon, sausages, rosemary, bay leaves, tomatoes, broth, and brandy. Bring to a boil, scraping the pan to loosen the brown bits. Add beans to the pot and stir to combine.

Place in oven, cover, and bake at 350 degrees for one hour.

Uncover, stir, and continue to bake for one more hour. Let cool, then refrigerate overnight.

Take the cassoulet out of the fridge two hours before you plan to reheat it to allow it to come to room temperature.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place Dutch oven with cover on into stove and reheat for 20 minutes.

Remove from oven and stir. Re-season if necessary.

Sprinkle panko and Parmesan on top and continue to heat with the cover off for 20 minutes or until warm.