

LAMB STEW GREEK STYLE

Looking for a new idea for your Easter lamb? Here's a hearty dish that got a thumbs up from my neighbors. I often use this cut of lamb for a cassoulet, but I wanted to try a different flavor profile. By simply changing some of the spices to a more Mediterranean leaning and subbing out orzo instead of beans, this transformed into a completely different dish. It's also a great meal if the family is coming over. You can make most of it the day before and just add the orzo 20 minutes before you're ready to serve. Now you'll have more time to spend with everyone at cocktail hour. (And no, those aren't mini-marshmallows on top in the picture. It's feta cheese!)

INGREDIENTS (Serves 6)

2 pounds lamb shoulder, fat trimmed, cut into 1" cubes

3 tablespoons olive oil

salt and pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour

2 onions, sliced

1 large carrot, diced

2 ribs celery, diced

4 cloves garlic, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon nutmeg

1 teaspoon oregano

1 teaspoon paprika

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper

2 bay leaves

1 ½ cups white wine

1 28-ounce can fire roasted crushed tomatoes

1 cup orzo pasta

fresh parley, chopped for garnish

1 lemon, zested for garnish

Feta cheese, for garnish

PREPARATION

Generously season the lamb with salt and pepper. Dredge in flour, making sure to shake off any excess.

Add olive oil to a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Brown the lamb pieces, making sure not to crowd them. You may need to do them in batches. Each batch should take about 8 minutes to brown. Transfer the meat to a plate and set aside.

Add the onions, carrots and celery and sauté for six to eight minutes. Add the garlic, cinnamon, nutmeg, oregano, paprika, cayenne pepper and bay leaves and stir to combine for one minute. Season with salt and pepper.

Add the lamb back in along with the white wine and crushed tomatoes. Cover and bring to a boil and then reduce to a simmer for one-hour. (If you're making the day ahead, stop here. Let cool and refrigerate overnight. The next day, reheat by bringing back up to a boil and then reduce to a simmer.)

Add orzo to the pot, cover, and stir to combine. Allow to cook for twenty minutes. Remove the bay leaves.

When done, stir to combine.

Serve in bowls and garnish with parsley, lemon zest and feta

cheese.