

PRIMAL GRILL – RECIPES

11. LEARNING TO LOVE LAMB

Barbacoa

Yogurt and Saffron-Marinated Lamb Chops

Lamb Burgers with Yogurt-Cucumber Sauce

THE REAL BARBACOA: MEXICAN PIT-BARBECUED LAMB

Source: The Barbecue Bible by Steven Raichlen (Workman, 2008)

Method: Indirect grilling

Serves: 8

Advance Preparation: 4 to 8 hours for marinating the lamb, plus about 4 hours cooking time

For the adobo paste and lamb:

6 guajillo chiles (or the equivalent of dried guajillo chili powder)

5 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped

1/4 medium onion, coarsely chopped

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

1/2 teaspoon ground clove

1/2 teaspoon ground allspice

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon salt

1/4 cup distilled white vinegar

1/4 cup water

1 bone-in leg of lamb, 5 to 6 pounds

For the consommé:

1 medium onion, cut into 1/2 inch dice

2 carrots, peeled and cut into 1/2 inch dice

1 zucchini, scrubbed and cut into 1/2 inch dice

1/2 small green cabbage, cored and cut into 1/2 inch dice

1 ear corn, shucked and cut into 1/2 inch rounds (optional)

2 bay leaves, 2 sprigs cilantro, and 2 sprigs epazote (optional), tied in a piece of cheesecloth

8 to 10 cups of water

1/4 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves

1 chipotle chile, minced

PRIMAL GRILL – RECIPES

Salt and freshly ground black pepper, or to taste

For serving:

Warm tortillas

Salsa Mexicana (recipe below)

You'll also need:

Banana leaves or 8 to 10 fresh or dried avocado leaves (optional; if using dried leaves, soak for 20 minutes in cold water to cover); toothpicks

Prepare the adobo. If using dried chiles, stem the chiles, tear open, and remove the veins and seeds. Soak in water to cover until soft and pliable, about 20 minutes. Drain the chiles and place in a blender with the garlic, onion, oregano, cloves, allspice, cinnamon, salt, vinegar, and water. Process to a smooth paste.

Using the tip of a paring knife, make a series of slits in the lamb, 1/4-inch deep and 1 inch apart. Smear the chile paste all over the lamb, working it into the slits, cover loosely with plastic wrap, and let marinate in the refrigerator for 4 to 8 hours (the longer the better).

Set up the grill for indirect grilling and preheat to medium-low.

Assemble the consommé. Combine the onion, carrots, zucchini, cabbage, tomato, potato, corn (if using), herb bundle, and water in a large fire-proof pot.

You're now ready to assemble the barbacoa. Place the consommé pot in the center of the grate that holds the charcoal, or if using gas, the grill grate (away from the heat). Place a metal rack, like a sturdy cake rack on top, and layer the banana or avocado leaves, if using; if not using, oil the rack. Place the lamb on top of the leaves, fat side up, and cover it with the remaining leaves, using toothpicks to secure them. Cover the grill tightly.

Cook the barbacoa until the lamb is fall-off-the-bone tender, 4 to 5 hours. If using a charcoal grill, you'll need to add 10 to 12 fresh coals per side every hour. When the lamb is done, the internal temperature will be about 170

PRIMAL GRILL – RECIPES

degrees F.

To serve the barbacoa, discard the top layer of avocado leaves and transfer the lamb and bottom layer of leaves to a platter. Let sit for 5 minutes, then thinly slice the meat or cut it into chunks. Remove the herb bundle from the consommé, then, using a ladle, skim off any fat floating on the surface of the soup. Stir in the chopped cilantro, chipotle, and salt and pepper; the soup should be highly seasoned. Serve the consommé first, then the meat. Accompany both with tortillas and salsa.

SALSA MEXICANA

Makes about 2 cups

2 ripe, red tomatoes, finely chopped
2 to 6 serrano or jalapeno chilies, seeded and finely chopped (for a hotter salsa, leave seeds in)
1/2 medium white onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice, or to taste
1/2 teaspoon salt, or to taste

In a mixing bowl, combine the tomatoes, chilies, onion, garlic, cilantro, lime juice, and salt and toss gently. Correct the seasoning, adding lime juice or salt to taste.

EXOTIC YOGURT AND SAFFRON MARINATED LAMB CHOPS (SHISLIK)

Source: The Barbecue Bible by Steven Raichlen (Workman, 2008)

Method: Direct grilling

Serves: 4

Advance Preparation: 24 to 48 hours for marinating the meat

For the lamb and marinade:

1/2 teaspoon saffron threads
1 tablespoon warm water

PRIMAL GRILL – RECIPES

2 cups plain whole-milk yogurt
1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
1 medium onion, finely chopped
8 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 tablespoons cracked black peppercorns
2 tablespoons chopped candied orange peel, or 4 strips orange zest
8 double rib lamb chops (each about 5 to 6 ounces and 2 inches thick)

For the saffron basting sauce:

1/4 teaspoon saffron threads
1 tablespoon warm water
3 tablespoons salted butter
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Prepare the marinade. Place the saffron in a large, deep nonreactive bowl and grind to a fine powder with a pestle or the end of a wooden spoon. Add the warm water, stir, and let stand for 10 minutes.

Add the yogurt, lemon juice, onion, garlic, peppercorns, and orange peel to the dissolved saffron and stir to mix. Add the lamb chops and make sure they are completely submerged in the marinade. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let marinate, refrigerated, for 24 to 48 hours.

Preheat the grill to high.

Meanwhile, prepare the saffron basting sauce. Place the saffron in a small, heavy nonreactive saucepan. Add the warm water, stir, and let stand for 10 minutes. Add the butter and lemon juice to the dissolved saffron and stir over low heat until the butter is melted and the mixture is blended and heated through. Remove from the heat and set aside.

When ready to cook, remove the chops from the marinade, season with salt and pepper. Oil the grill grate, then arrange the chops on the hot grate. Grill, turning with tongs, until cooked to taste, 8 to 10 minutes per side for medium-well, which is how Iranians like their lamb. Brush the chops several times as they cook with the saffron basting sauce.

PRIMAL GRILL – RECIPES

Transfer the chops to serving plates or a platter and serve immediately.

GOAT CHEESE-STUFFED LAMB BURGERS WITH YOGURT CUCUMBER SAUCE

Source: Raichlen's Indoor Grilling by Steven Raichlen (Workman, 2004)

Method: Direct grilling

Serves: 4

For the burgers:

- 1-1/2 pounds ground lamb
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh mint, or 2 teaspoons dried mint
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano (preferably Greek)
- 1 teaspoon coarse salt (kosher or sea) or more to taste
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 pound goat cheese

For serving:

- 4 pita breads
- 4 rinsed romaine lettuce leaves
- 4 paper-thin slices red onion (optional)
- 1 medium-size cucumber, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 medium-size ripe tomato, thinly sliced
- Yogurt Cucumber Sauce (recipe follows)

Place the ground lamb, chopped onion, garlic, mint, parsley, oregano, salt, and pepper in a mixing bowl and stir with a wooden spoon to mix. Wet your hands with cold water and divide the mixture into 4 equal portions.

Working quickly and with a light touch, pat each portion into a thick patty with a 2-ounce round of goat cheese in the center. (Make sure cheese is completely covered with meat.) Place the patties on a plate lined with plastic wrap and refrigerate, covered, until ready to grill.

Set up the grill for direct grilling and preheat to high.

PRIMAL GRILL – RECIPES

Grill the lamb burgers until cooked through, about 7 minutes per side (about 170 degrees on an instant-read meat thermometer). Remove the burgers and cover to keep warm.

Place the pita breads on the grill, and lowering the temperature and working in batches, if necessary, grill until toasted, about 1 minute per side.

Cut a slit in each pita. Place a lettuce leaf inside, followed by a burger, an onion slice, if using, some cucumber and tomato slices, and a generous dollop of yogurt sauce. Serve at once.

Yogurt Cucumber Sauce

Makes about 1-1/2 cups

1 medium-size cucumber
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 teaspoon coarse salt (kosher or sea), or more to taste
1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint, or 1 teaspoon dried mint
Freshly ground black pepper

Peel the cucumber and cut it in half lengthwise. Scrape out the seeds with a melon baller or spoon. Coarsely grate the cucumber.

Place the garlic and salt in a mixing bowl and mash to a paste with the back of a spoon. Stir in the grated cucumber, yogurt, olive oil, and mint. Taste for seasoning, adding more salt, if necessary, and pepper to taste. The sauce should be highly seasoned.