

Lamb Shanks Braised in Red Wine & Tomato

With Homemade Pici Pasta in the Lamb Braising Sauce

This recipe idea came to me when I was writing *Death in Abundance*, my third *Antonio Cortese Mystery* novel set in beautiful Montepulciano, in Tuscany. In the novel, Antonio's aunt prepares these amazing Lamb Shanks, and the family gathers around to make homemade pici pasta. Once the lamb shanks are done cooking, she adds tomato paste to the braising liquid to create this amazing pasta sauce!

Pici is a thick, rustic pasta rolled out by hand. You can easily substitute dried bucatini pasta, or any other pasta shape that you like. If you are on a Keto diet you can forego the pasta or substitute zucchini zoodles, spaghetti squash, or hearts of palm pasta, available at Trader Joe's. I only made two lamb shanks, but the sauce would easily accommodate up to six servings of pasta.

4 to 6 servings*

*Assumes one lamb shank per person.
There will be enough sauce for six.

One lamb shank per person
(see Frankie's Tips)

salt & pepper

3 to 4 tablespoons olive oil

1 to 2 oz. dried porcini mushrooms

1 medium onion—diced

2 medium carrots—diced

1 to 2 ribs of celery—diced

3-5 cloves garlic—minced

3 sprigs Italian parsley—chopped

2 sprigs fresh rosemary—chopped

1-1/2 cups red Tuscan wine
(see Frankie's Tips)

2 cups chicken stock

28 oz. can whole-peeled plum tomatoes

3-5 ounces tomato paste

Recipe of homemade pici pasta or one
pound dried bucatini or pasta of choice

Procedure:

1. Salt and pepper lamb shanks on all sides. Allow to sit at room temperature for about an hour.

2. Place dried mushrooms in 8 ounces of hot water. Set aside to rehydrate.
3. Prep all ingredients (a step the French call *mis en place*).
4. Heat two tablespoons of the oil in a large, flat-bottom Dutch Oven or heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat until oil begins to shimmer. Brown lamb shanks well on all sides and transfer to a platter.
5. Reduce heat to medium. Add additional olive oil if needed. Add onions, carrots, celery, garlic, rosemary and half of the parsley (save remainder for garnish). Sauté, stirring occasionally until the vegetables start to caramelize, about 10 to 15 minutes. Add mushrooms with their liquid.
6. Pre-heat oven to 325 F (or slow-cooker if you prefer).
7. Add wine and chicken stock. Use a spatula or wooden spoon to scrape the browned bits from the pan bottom (this step is known as deglazing). Simmer until liquids are reduced by about a quarter.
8. Use your hands to squish the whole plum tomatoes and add them to the sauce. Return the shanks to the pan and turn to coat all sides.
9. Cover and place in the oven for approximately 3 hours, or until a knife inserted into the meat meets no resistance. After 1-1/2 to 2 hours, flip the meat over (see Frankie's Tips).
10. Move meat to a platter and cover with foil to rest for 10 to 15 minutes. While meat is resting, add tomato paste to sauce to accomplish the thickness you desire. Taste sauce and add salt and pepper as needed.
11. Enjoy your meal with joy, laughter, and a heart of gratitude for all your blessings. Buon appetito!



Frankie's Tips:

- ◆ I recommend one lamb shank per person. This may be more than most people will eat but the leftovers are superb!
- ◆ You can use any red wine but for authenticity I suggest a Tuscan Sangiovese. In my novel they used a Rosso di Montepulciano but that they be hard to find unless you have an excellent wine shop nearby. Any Sangiovese, such as an inexpensive Chianti, will do fine.
- ◆ I went to three stores looking for porcini mushrooms. All of them were out of stock or did not carry them. I settled on dried oyster mushrooms which were still quite acceptable but I would use porcini if you can find them.
- ◆ If you are making your own homemade picci pasta I would start it as soon as your lamb shanks go into the oven. You will find the recipe on the following page.