

"Mutton requires more careful cooking than lamb, but the robust flavour makes up for it" Gordon Ramsay

Spicy Tagine

Serves 4-6

I prefer mutton to lamb tagine as the meat stands up better to the spices. The heady fragrance is from Ras el-hanout, a Moroccan spice blend. If you can't find it, make your own by mixing a teaspoon each of ground cinnamon, ground cardamom, ground cumin, mild chilli powder and garam masala with a pinch of saffron.

2 tbsp plain flour
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
500g mutton, cut into smaller chunks
4 tbsp olive oil
1 large onion, finely sliced
2 crushed garlic cloves
1 tbsp grated fresh root ginger
1 1/2 tbsp Ras el-hanout
1 tbsp tomato purée
500-600ml vegetable stock
100g dried apricots, chopped
1 preserved lemon, chopped, or a few squeezes of lemon juice
1 tsp clear honey
Couscous, for serving

Method

- 1** Season the flour with salt and pepper and coat the mutton pieces in the mixture. Heat half the oil in a large heavy-bottomed pan or a cast-iron casserole and cook the meat until browned all over.
- 2** Add the onion and a little more oil, if necessary, and cook for 5 minutes until it starts to soften. Add the garlic, ginger, spice blend and purée and fry for a few minutes until fragrant and the mutton is coated in the mixture.
- 3** Pour in enough stock to cover and bring to the boil, then reduce to a simmer. Cover the pan with a lid and gently cook, stirring occasionally, for 1 1/2 hours.
- 4** Remove the lid and stir in the apricots, preserved lemon and honey. Simmer uncovered for another 30-40 minutes, stirring frequently, until the mutton is tender. Taste and adjust the seasoning.
- 5** If you like, reheat the stew in an earthenware tagine and serve with a large serving of couscous.

Mutton Biryani

Serves 4-6

This is by no means a traditional biryani, which would be cooked under a pastry crust, but my take on a curry-house favourite. If you can, marinate the meat overnight as this helps to tenderise it.

FOR THE MUTTON

500g mutton, diced into bite-sized pieces
15g Greek or natural yoghurt
1 tbsp freshly grated root ginger, plus a
2cm knob of fresh root ginger, peeled
1 crushed garlic clove, plus 2 cloves, peeled
1 tsp mild chilli powder
1/2 green chilli, seeded and roughly chopped
1 tsp coriander seeds
Pinch of ground turmeric
2 tbsp olive oil
1 small onion, sliced
100ml single cream
Squeeze of lemon juice
Few drops of rosewater
Handful of coriander leaves

FOR THE RICE

1 large onion, finely chopped
3 tbsp olive oil
250g basmati rice, rinsed
2 cinnamon sticks
4 star anise
4-5 cardamom pods, lightly crushed
Peel of 1/2 orange
Peel of 1/2 lemon
600ml hot lamb or chicken stock
Knob of butter

Method

- 1 Marinate the mutton in the yoghurt, grated ginger and crushed garlic for at least 2 hours or preferably overnight.
- 2 Place the remaining ginger, garlic, chilli powder, chilli, coriander seeds and turmeric in a food processor and whiz to a fine paste. If necessary, add a little olive oil or water to get the paste moving in the processor.
- 3 Heat a large heavy-bottomed pan or a cast-iron casserole with a little olive oil. Tip in the onion and cook over a medium heat for 4-5 minutes until softened. Stir in the spice paste and cook for 2-3 minutes until fragrant. Add the mutton and yoghurt to the pan and season well. Stir in the cream and

cover the pan with a tight-fitting lid. Cook over a low heat for 1 1/2-2 hours until the mutton is tender. Stir the mixture occasionally and add a splash of water if the mixture looks too dry.

4 Now start preparing the rice: preheat the oven to 200C/Gas 6. Sauté the onion in the oil in an ovenproof pan for 4-5 minutes until soft. Tip in the rice, cinnamon, star anise, cardamom and peel. Season and stir over a medium-to-high heat for 30 seconds. Add the stock, bring to the boil and cover with a tight-fitting lid. Transfer the pan to the oven for 20 minutes.

5 Remove the rice from the oven and leave to stand for 5 minutes. Mix through a knob of butter and season, fluffing the grains of rice with a fork to separate them.

6 Pile the rice on top of the mutton and sprinkle over the lemon juice and rosewater. Cover with a tight-fitting lid and return to the oven for 10-15 minutes to warm through.

7 Bring the pot to the table to serve. Stir through the coriander leaves and mix the rice and mutton together before piling on to individual plates.

Scotch Broth

Serves 4

When I was young, my family would call this neck soup, but it is better-known as Scotch broth, which sounds far more appetising. For me, a good soup should consist of a clear, flavourful broth with lots of chunky meat and veg. If you can, cook the mutton until tender (end of step 2), cool and chill overnight. Spoon off any more fat that rises to the surface.

500g neck of mutton, with bone
Few sprigs of thyme
2 fresh bay leaves
2 large onions, 1 halved and 1 chopped
2 carrots, 1 halved and 1 chopped
1 stick of celery, halved
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 medium turnip, peeled and chopped
1/2 white cabbage, core trimmed, and chopped
30g pearl barley, soaked in cold water overnight
Handful of flat-leaf parsley, chopped

Method

- 1** Put the mutton into a large pan and cover with cold water. Bring to the boil and let it bubble for a few minutes until the scum floats to the surface. Remove the mutton and discard the water along with the scum and impurities. (This will help to ensure that the resulting broth is clear for cooking the vegetables.)
- 2** Return the meat to the pan and add the thyme, bay leaves, onion, carrot and celery halves and a little seasoning. Fill with enough cold water to cover and place the pot over a medium heat. Bring the liquid to a simmer and cook gently for 1 1/2 hours until the meat is just tender.
- 3** Add the chopped vegetables and barley to the pan and top up with more boiling water, if necessary. Simmer for another 30-45 minutes until the barley is cooked.
- 4** Remove the mutton from the pan and separate the meat from the bones and any gristle. Chop the meat into bite-sized pieces and return to the soup. Reheat and season to taste. Sprinkle with parsley to serve.