

Lamb Ragout With Spring Vegetables

By David Tanis

Total Time 2½ hours

Rating ★★★★★ (175)



Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times

To celebrate the end of winter, French cooks make navarin printanier, a lamb stew. Instead of serving it with potatoes, parsnips or other winter root vegetables, this colorful stew is brimming with fresh spring produce, a mixture of small vegetables like baby turnips, fava beans and scallions. To keep it on the lighter side, use a splash of white wine instead of red. Finish with peas or asparagus tips, cooked briefly, if they are available. The stew can be made a day ahead, but the vegetables should be freshly cooked before serving.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

3 pounds lamb shoulder, trimmed of exterior fat, cut in 2-inch chunks

Salt and pepper

2 teaspoons fennel seed, crushed in a mortar or spice mill

2 tablespoons olive oil, more as needed

2 medium onions, diced, about 2 cups

4 garlic cloves, roughly chopped

1 bay leaf

A few sprigs fresh thyme

1 tablespoon tomato paste

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1 cup white wine

4 cups chicken or vegetable broth

3 pounds fava beans in the pod, or use 1½ cups frozen baby lima

PREPARATION

Step 1

Season lamb chunks generously with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with fennel seed and rub to distribute. Set aside for 30 minutes (or refrigerate for up to several hours, or overnight).

Step 2

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Put 2 tablespoons oil in a Dutch oven or similar heavy pot over medium-high heat. When hot, add lamb and brown on all sides, until meat is well caramelized, about 10 minutes. Work in batches if necessary to avoid crowding pan.

Step 3

Remove lamb, turn heat to medium and add onions (and a little oil if necessary) and cook, stirring, until softened and lightly colored, 5 to 8 minutes. Add garlic, bay leaf and thyme and cook for 1 minute, then stir in tomato paste. Sprinkle with flour and cook 2 minutes more. Add white wine and whisk well as mixture thickens. Whisk in broth and bring to a brisk simmer.

Step 4

beans or edamame, defrosted
1 medium fennel bulb, trimmed
and cut into 1-inch squares (reserve
the fronds for garnish)
½ pound baby carrots, about 12,
trimmed and peeled
2 pounds baby turnips, trimmed
and halved or quartered
2 tablespoons butter
1 bunch scallions, cut in 2-inch
lengths
1 teaspoon lemon zest
2 tablespoons parsley

Return meat to pot. Cover pot and bake for about 1 hour 15 minutes, until meat is tender when probed. Taste sauce and adjust seasoning. Keep warm, or cool to room temperature and refrigerate overnight before proceeding with vegetables (which should be prepared right before serving).

Step 5

Prepare the vegetables: Remove fava beans from pod. Blanch 2 minutes in boiling water, then cool in ice water. Peel and discard outer gray skin from each bean. You should have about 1½ cups. Set aside. (If using frozen lima beans or edamame, cook the thawed beans for 3 to 4 minutes in salted boiling water.)

Step 6

Bring a medium pot of fresh water to a boil and salt well. Add fennel and simmer until tender, about 2 minutes. Remove with spider and rinse with cold water to refresh. In the same pot, cook carrots until tender, about 4 minutes, then remove and refresh. Cook turnips for 3 minutes, then remove and refresh.

Step 7

Just before serving, melt butter in a wide skillet over medium heat. Add cooked fennel, carrots and turnips. Add scallions and stir to distribute. Season with salt and pepper. Add a splash of water and cook until scallions have softened, about 2 minutes. Add fava beans and heat through. Stir in lemon zest and parsley.

Step 8

Transfer meat and sauce to a large serving dish. Spoon vegetables around meat and garnish with fennel fronds.

TIP

To make a quick vegetable broth, simmer 1 sliced medium leek, 1 sliced small onion, 2 chopped mushrooms and 1 stalk chopped celery in 6 cups water for 30 minutes. Strain and refrigerate for up to 3 days.