

Taste

food & drink



Grilling chops

Expand your repertoire with wine-marinated grilled lamb

These New Zealand lamb chops were steeped in a cabernet-coffee marinade, grilled and served with fresh mint sauce.

JENNY McQUEEN

Fall may be upon us, but don't let your oven suck you back inside too soon. True, grilling and summertime go hand-in-hand, but autumn grilling might be even better. No sweating in the sun as the grill radiates heat on you. Just cool, crisp weather and a range of heavier flavors to experiment with. Today, I'd like to talk about marinated grilled lamb.

There are actually three main types of lamb available in U.S. markets: American, New Zealand and Icelandic. The classification will often tell you where it was raised, but it can also refer to the breed. For example, Stark Hollow Farm in Vermont sells Icelandic lamb, as they brought the breed over from Iceland.

American lamb is raised mainly in Montana and Colorado and is often grass fed and grain finished, meaning they fatten the sheep up with grain just before

slaughter. There are not specific age restrictions on American lamb, and the Food and Drug Administration allows the presence of growth hormones and antibiotics in it. So, take time to read the label if you want to avoid these.

New Zealand lamb is smaller and surprisingly (even when shipped across the globe) cheaper as well. New Zealand lamb must be under a year old and is usually entirely grass fed. It is leaner and has a deeper flavor than American or Icelandic lamb, making it ideal for curries and stews.

Icelandic lamb can be harder to find. It's only harvested in Iceland once a year, and usually appears on select grocery store shelves between late September and early December. It also offers some of the most complex flavors of any red meat on the market. Strict farming practices, idyllic pastures and the absence of hormones, antibiotics and chemicals make this breed a favorite among food enthusiasts.

Luckily, our recipe can be made with any type of lamb. Since lamb is relatively tender, marinating it too long can break down the fibers and cause it to become mushy. I recommend a 2- to 4-hour marinade to ensure flavor in every bite.

MARINATED GRILLED LAMB WITH MINT SAUCE

Yield: 4 servings

6-8 lamb chops
Cabernet marinade
Mint sauce

For the marinade:

1 cup dry red wine such as a cabernet or zinfandel
¾ cup very strong black coffee or 2 shots of espresso
¼ cup olive oil
1 shallot
3 cloves garlic
¼ cup fresh mint leaves
One 2- to 3-inch sprig fresh rosemary
1 ½ Tablespoons Dijon mustard
¼ cup packed brown sugar
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
2 teaspoons ground coriander
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Place all items in a food processor and process until blended. Pour over the lamb chops, taking care that each one is fully covered. Cover tightly and place in the fridge for 2-4 hours. I like to put mine in a bowl or gallon-sized resealable bag so that I can mix everything around halfway

through the marinating process.

For the mint sauce:

The best way to cut fresh leafy greens for a sauce is a chiffonade. Take the leaves and stack them up, one atop the other. Next roll them tightly together. Thinly slice the roll at a 45-degree angle, yielding long, thin strips.

1 shallot, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1 Tablespoon sugar
¾ cup white wine vinegar
¼ teaspoon salt
3 leaves fresh basil, fine chiffonade
1 cup fresh mint leaves, fine chiffonade

Combine shallot, garlic, sugar and vinegar in a small sauce pan over medium heat. Bring to simmer and allow to simmer for 30 minutes.

Pour over basil and mint and mix well.

For the grilling:

Heat grill to medium high. Remove lamb from marinade, place on the piping hot grill and cook for 3-4 minutes per side until the internal temperature reaches 125 for medium rare.

Remove from the grill and cover loosely with aluminum foil and allow to rest for 10 minutes. Trust me, do not skip the resting phase. This is a vital step to juicy grilled lamb. Serve drizzled with mint sauce and a glass of red wine. ■



Food Savvy
with
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