

Lamb Stew in Claypot Recipe (Sah Wor Yung Yuk)

Ingredients: Serves 10

1.3 kg butt end of leg of lamb, cut into 3 equal slices across the bone by the butcher
2 tablespoons peanut oil
Six ½-inch-thick slices ginger (90 g)
2 tablespoons bean sauce
220 g leeks, white parts only, well washed and cut into 1½-inch julienne
½ cup Chinese white rice wine or gin
2½ cups Chicken Stock, or more if needed
20 small Chinese black mushrooms, soaked in hot water for 30 minutes, washed, and stems removed
3 tablespoons oyster sauce
Eight 1- by 2-inch pieces dried tangerine peel, soaked in hot water for 30 minutes, until softened
110 g fresh water chestnuts or jicama, peeled and cut into ¼-inch slices
3 bean curd sticks, soaked in hot water for 1 hour, drained, and cut into 1½-inch pieces
2 cups bamboo shoots in 1-inch cubes
One 9-inch-long stalk fresh sugarcane, hard skin peeled, cut into 3 equal pieces, and each piece quartered lengthwise
4 lemon leaves or Kaffir lime leaves
½ teaspoon salt

For the marinade:

1 tablespoon ginger juice mixed with 2 tablespoons Chinese white rice wine or gin
1½ teaspoons salt
1½ teaspoons sugar
Pinch freshly ground white pepper

Method:

To prepare the lamb, separate the meat from the bone. Trim the fat and discard. You should now have around 600 - 700 g of meat. Cut the meat into 1½-inch cubes. In a large bowl, combine the marinade ingredients. Place the cubed lamb and bone in the marinade and allow to rest at room temperature for at least 2 hours. Strain off the marinade. Separate the lamb and bone from the marinade and reserve separately. Heat a wok over high heat for 1 minute. Add the peanut oil and coat the wok with it using a spatula. When a wisp of white smoke appears, add the ginger, stir, and cook for 30 seconds. Add the bean sauce and leeks and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the lamb and bone, stir, and cook for 1 minute. Add the wine, stir, and cook for another minute. Turn off the heat and transfer the contents to a clay pot or a large pot. Add the stock, mushrooms, oyster sauce, tangerine peel, water chestnuts, bean curd sticks, bamboo shoots, sugarcane, lemon leaves and marinade. Mix together thoroughly. All ingredients should be covered by liquid; if not, add stock to cover. Cover and, over medium heat, bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer, in a clay pot for 1¼ hours or in a regular pot with the lid cracked for 1½ hours. Stir the contents frequently during cooking. The meat should be tender. Taste to see if salt is needed. If so, add, mix well, and cook for another 5 minutes. Turn off the heat. If using a clay pot, serve it at the table. Otherwise, transfer the contents to a heated tureen and serve, as a stew, in individual bowls. This intensely flavored stew is traditionally served with a green vegetable such as Chinese Broccoli to complement its richness.

Note: This slow-cooked lamb is a representative dish from Xi'an. This beautiful city and region of China, which has yielded from its archaeological sites that vast terracotta army, is justly famed throughout China for its lamb cookery. The initial preparation of this particular recipe is quite

similar to the Lamb Braised with Red Wine Rice Recipe from Fujian, another demonstration of how lamb is prepared in much of China. What makes this dish distinctly from Xi'an follows and includes the flavorings of fresh sugarcane and lemon leaves. This stew is usually cooked in a sand clay pot, a sah wor. If you have one, by all means use it. If not, a large pot will suffice. If you cannot find bean curd sticks, you could deep-fry fresh firm bean curd until crispy, as a substitute.

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