

Spicy Lamb Casserole of Sienna

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The pinch of chili signifies that this is a Southern Italian dish, probably from the Basilicata region, where sheep were the main source of income. Such dishes often originated with shepherds who used wild herbs and vegetables found around their campsites to flavor their food.

Ingredients

3 tablespoons olive oil
 2½ pounds lamb shoulder or leg, cut into 1 inch cubes
 1 small onion, finely chopped
 2 celery stalks, finely chopped
 5 garlic cloves, chopped
 1 cup dry Marsala
 ¾ teaspoon dried red chili flakes
 1 tablespoon crushed juniper berries
 3 tablespoons tomato paste
 1 cup chicken stock
 1 rosemary sprig
 20 small boiling pearl onions, peeled
 3 peeled potatoes cut into large cubes
 2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley

Preparation Time	15 min	Difficulty	Simple
Portions	8 servings	Yield	
Country/Region			
Vegetarian	No		

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Heat the olive oil in a large casserole. Add the lamb in batches, so that you do not crowd the pan. Season with salt and pepper, and brown the meat over high heat. Remove each batch from the casserole as it browns. Once all the lamb is browned and has been removed from the casserole, add the onion, celery, and garlic, reduce the heat to medium and cook for 4 to 5 minutes until softened.

Return the lamb to the casserole. Pour in the Marsala and cook over high heat until it is dark brown and reduced by

half. Add the dried red chili flakes and juniper berries and cook, stirring for half a minute. Add the tomato paste, chicken stock, and rosemary. Also add about 1-cup water, or enough just to cover and bring to a boil.

Cover the casserole with a lid, and bake in the oven for 45 minutes. Add the peeled pearl onions and potato and cook for another 45 minutes. Stir the parsley throughout just before serving.

Notes

Did you know? Sienna (Siena in the Italian spelling) is situated on three gently rising hills in central Tuscany, Italy. The Siennese are said to speak the purest form of the Tuscan dialect which, at the unification of Italy, became the national language.