

Lamb Elegance – Lamb Méchoui

Méchoui is an Arab word meaning roast and it is given especially to whole lamb cooked outdoors on a spit over a charcoal or wood fire.

It is regarded as the "very best" in the Middle East, where lamb is the most important meat.

In some sections of Canada, Méchoui parties are becoming the fashion and always thoroughly enjoyed. The equipment needed is simple and once you are organized, it is easy to do.

Have the butcher prepare a whole baby lamb, weighing about 25 - 45 pounds on foot. Make sure the butcher cuts only a 12 - 14 inch opening in the middle of the stomach. Do not hang longer than 48 hours.

Wash lamb inside and out with a cloth dipped in cider or wine vinegar, mixed half and half with water, then pat dry with paper towels.

Crush 10 to 12 cloves of unpeeled garlic with 3 tablespoons coriander seeds and 5 tablespoons coarse salt (do this with ingredients wrapped in a cloth and crushed with a heavy knife or a stone as the Arabs do). Pour mixture in stomach of lamb, add 2 teaspoons freshly ground pepper, 2 lemons, unpeeled and sliced, 1/2 pound margarine in one piece. Tie opening with a soft wire. I like to use florist wire, because it is easy to manipulate, but any wire can be used (string or thread would burn during cooking period).

Push the metal rod through the lamb from head to hind quarters, and truss the legs together with wire attaching them to the spit. Then rub outside of lamb all over with 1 pound margarine creamed with 2 tablespoons paprika, 2 tablespoons each of thyme and ground cumin.

Melt another pound of margarine, add the juice of 3 lemons and 1 tablespoon thyme. Use as basting sauce. When I have fresh thyme I tie a large bouquet on a dishmop and use that to dip in the basting mixture to brush the lamb lightly each time it is turned (about every 15 - 20 minutes).

Build a bed of red-hot coals thick enough to last 3 - 4 hours. Suspend the lamb in front of it as shown in the illustration.

Under the lamb place a large baking tray or make one with a double layer of heavy duty foil to catch the drippings to be used as gravy.

It usually takes 3 hours, the lamb when ready should be golden brown and crisp on the outside and the meat very juicy on the inside.

When ready to serve – remove wire from opening and pour juice in pan (2 [people] are needed to do this) – then pour the whole into a hot saucepan. Add 2 cans of undiluted consommé and if you feel so inclined, add 2 cups dry Madeira or 1 cup rye whisky. Let the whole get hot while scraping the pan and add to the meat juices in the saucepan. Serve very hot, easy to do by reheating a few seconds over the hot charcoals.

To serve get a good carver to cut it. Remove from rod to a large table covered with oilcloth – with hot platter in front of lamb to place cut meat – each one helps himself and always enjoys the delicate fine flavour that only a roasted "Méchoui" can give to the lamb.

The Moroccans place on tables bowls of coarse salt mixed with ground cumin – 2 tablespoons salt to 1tablespoon cumin – they dip their pieces of meat lightly into it. You may enjoy trying it!