

Lamb and Wild Rice with Roasted Autumn Vegetables

A good project for a lazy Sunday. It will fill your place up with some great aromas.



This recipe is a mixture of rich, tender roasted pumpkin, flavorful root vegetables, and earthy lamb and wild grains, and is based on something I saw in the October '08 *Everyday Food* magazine. In their version, it's rigitoni instead of rice, and it's goat cheese instead of chunks of braised lamb shank.

You'll need to decide what to use for your braising liquid. I chopped up 1 onion, 1 stalk of celery, a handful of baby carrots, 2 crushed garlic cloves, and a tablespoon of fresh rosemary leaves in 2 cups chicken stock, but I bet you could get by with two cups of good red wine. Later, I used a rustic multi-grain rice mix I found in the store, but you could substitute it with your favorite, though I think brown rice would work better than Uncle Ben's. I made this over the course of 2 days – braising the lamb the first day, and doing the rest the second day. It's probably not a recipe you want

to make after a long day at work, but it would be a good project for a lazy Sunday, or you could make most of it days in advance, and then put it all together for a weeknight dinner.

*2 **lamb shanks**, trimmed of silver skin*
*some kind of **flavorful braising liquid** (see above)*
salt** and **pepper
*1 teaspoon **oil***

*1 medium **sugar pumpkin** (about 3 pounds)*
*3 **shallots***
*1 **fennel** (anise) bulb*
salt** and **pepper
*several fresh **sage** leaves*
*3 tablespoons **olive oil***

*1 cup **multigrain rice mixture***
*1½ cups **chicken stock***

Braising the lamb shank :

Preheat the oven to 325°. Trim the silver skin off the shanks by slipping the point under the shiny whitish layer that covers the meat, and remove it in long strips to reveal the red meat below. Trim off the really big blobs of fat, too. Season with salt and pepper, and brown them on all sides over medium heat on the stovetop, about 8 minutes. Remove the shanks, and brown your braising vegetables if you're using any, and add the liquid, scraping up the browned bits on the bottom of the pan (aka deglazing). Return the shanks to the pan, cover, and cook in the oven for 1½-2 hours. Remove the shanks, and cool enough to handle, then pull the meat off the bones, removing any fat and gristle, and set aside.

Roasting the vegetables :

While the lamb is cooking, peel, seed and chop the pumpkin into 1 inch cubes. Cut off the stalks and fronds of the

fennel, and then slice the fennel bulb 8 ways, diagonally, but so each wedge retains a bit of the core, so they'll stay together. Peel the shallots, and cut them in half or quarters depending on the size, still trying to keep each part connected to the core. Toss all of this in a bowl with the salt, pepper, sage leaves, and olive oil, and spread on a foil-lined cookie sheet and roast in a 425° oven for about an hour, tossing after 30 minutes, and checking every 5 minutes for the last 15 to make sure nothing is burning.

Putting it all together:

Prepare the rice according to the instructions. (If you did what I did, and made the other two parts of this recipe earlier, you can reheat the lamb and the vegetables in the same pan as the rice by using a steamer basket.)

Combine all, and taste for seasoning.