

## Arni Kleftiko (Rebel Lamb)

By evelyn/athens on June 03, 2006



8 Reviews



Prep Time: 15 mins

Total Time: 3 1/4 hrs

Servings: 4-6

### About This Recipe

"The verb 'klevo' in Greek means 'to steal'. This delicious lamb dish is called 'kleftiko' because, it is said, that when Greeks were fighting to liberate themselves from Ottoman Rule and hiding in the mountains, they would seal all the ingredients for this dish in a clay pot, bury it with hot coals under ground, cover with dirt, and allow it to braise, slowly, until done. This way, there were no delicious cooking smells in the air to betray their presence and bring the Ottomans to their hide-out. A romantic story - a lovely dinner. Don't forget some good red wine. Many, for lack of a clay pot (like a bean pot) wrap their kleftiko up well in parchment (a couple of layers) and braise that way."

### Ingredients

- 1 small leg of lamb, bone in, cut into serving pieces or 6 shoulder lamb chops
- 1 large onions, peeled and cut into quarters
- 2 tomatoes, peeled, seeded and diced or 1 lb good quality plum tomatoes, drained and diced
- 10 garlic cloves, peeled and left whole
- 1 1/2 tablespoons minced fresh oregano or 1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano, crumbled
- 1 1/2 tablespoons minced fresh spearmint or 1 1/2 teaspoons dried spearmint, crumbled
- 5 medium size potatoes, peeled and quartered
- 8 ounces kefalotiri (pecorino or even parmesan can be subbed in a pinch) or 8 ounces kefalograviera cheese, cut into chunks of about 1 1/2 inches ( pecorino or even parmesan can be subbed in a pinch)
- 1 large carrots, peeled and coarsely sliced
- 1 cup red wine
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- salt & freshly ground black pepper

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 325°F.
2. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients together and toss well with scrupulously clean hands until everything is well-coated. Season generously with pepper, but go a little easier on the salt than you normally would cause the cheese will also lend its salt to the finished dish.
3. If you have a large clay pot, like a bean pot, assemble the ingredients there, cover with lid, and proceed with recipe. If not, cut 6 large sheets of parchment, distribute the kleftiko mixture evenly amongst the 6 sheets, and wrap up envelope-style. You may need to double-wrap cause you don't want any of the lovely juices this recipe emits to get lost in drainage while braising. A large, covered casserole would work well, too. Basically what you want to do is have as little liquid escape during cooking as possible.
4. Braise, in the oven, for 3 to 3 1/2 hours. You want the meat to be falling off the bone. Yes, the potatoes and carrot will be very soft and tender, but will be permeated with a deep-rich flavour. Do not judge this dish by the cooking standards you are used to - remember its origins - the conditions these people lived under -- this is gourmet food created during a time of rebellion and should be enjoyed under its own standard.

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