

## Lamb Shanks Braised with Garlic

(serves 4)

4 lamb shanks

3 Tbs. olive oil

20 cloves of garlic, separated but not peeled

salt

3/4 tsp. or so dried herbs—for example, thyme, marjoram, savory, oregano, basil—mixed together

1/2 c dry white French vermouth or dry white wine

pepper

water as needed

Equipment: A heavy sauté pan or shallow casserole with a lid, just large enough to hold the shanks in one uncrowded layer; a fork, a wooden spoon, a plate, and a strainer or food mill.

1. Warm the olive oil in the sauté pan or casserole over medium-high heat. Brown the lamb shanks on all sides. Add the unpeeled garlic cloves and the herbs. Salt lightly. Turn down the heat to very low (as low as your burner will go) and cover the pan with the lid.
2. Allow the lamb shanks to steam in their own juices for 1 1/2 hours or so. Check periodically to make sure that the shanks are not burning up. If there is no juice in the pan and the shanks are starting to stick, add a couple of tablespoons of water to the pan, replace the cover, and continue to cook over the lowest possible heat. Turn the shanks over about 45 minutes into the cooking time; cover and continue cooking.
3. After 1 1/2 hours, test the meat with a fork to see if it is tender. If the meat resists the fork, cover and return the pan to the heat for another 15-30 minutes, depending on the size of the shanks.
4. When the meat is tender, remove it and the unpeeled garlic to the plate. Keep warm under some foil or in a warming oven.
5. Raise the flame under the pan and boil the juices rapidly to evaporate all the water in the pan. When the juices have crystallized and browned in the bottom of the pan and the only liquid left is pure fat, pour the fat out of the pan.
6. Return the pan to the heat and deglaze it with the vermouth or white wine. Stir and scrape the bottom of the pan with the wooden spoon to dissolve all the juices into the vermouth.
7. Remove the pan from the heat. Purée the reserved garlic cloves through the strainer (pushing with the wooden spoon) or the food mill into the pan with the deglazed juices. Stir the garlic pulp into the liquid to thicken it slightly.
8. Return the lamb shanks to the pan and baste with the pan juices. Taste and add some additional salt, if needed. Grind some fresh pepper over the lamb and serve hot from the casserole.

Serve the braised lamb shanks with steamed couscous, rice, or (a richer alternative) potatoes and celery root mashed together with butter and cream. Any leftover lamb shanks may be refrigerated or frozen and reheated for another meal.