MARRAKECH LAMB STEW WITH ROOT VEGETABLES

Adapted from Simply in Season

1.5 lb boneless lamb, bite-sized pieces
1 large onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
5 medium carrots, chopped
2 c stewed tomatoes
2 medium turnips, chopped
1 medium potato, chopped
1 c beef broth
1 cinnamon stick
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp coriander
1 tsp cloves
1 tsp turmeric
1/4 tsp hot dried chilies
pinch ground allspice
pinch ground nutmeg
2 c chickpeas, cooked
1/2 c prunes, pitted, halved
1/2 c raisins
2 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped, optional

1. Add cooking oil to soup pot. Brown lamb in batches, then set aside.
2. Stir onion and garlic into drippings and saute until translucent and tender. Return meat to pot.
3. Add carrots, tomatoes, turnips, potato, broth, cinnamon, and spices to pot and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 40 minutes.
4. Stir in chickpeas, prunes and raisins. Cover and cook until vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes.
5. Stir in fresh parsley. Serve on a bed of couscous or rice.

EASY SPINACH GRATIN

Adapted from thekitchn.com

Butter or oil for coating dish
4 lb fresh spinach, blanched, coarsely chopped
6 oz Gruyere cheese, grated
1/2 medium yellow onion, diced
5 Tbsp unsalted butter
1 1/4 tsp kosher salt, divided
1/4 c all-purpose flour
3 c whole milk
1/4 tsp grated nutmeg
1/3 c panko breadcrumbs
2 Tbsp grated Parmesan cheese

1. Preheat oven to 425F. Coat a 9-in square baking dish with butter or oil.
2. Melt butter in Dutch oven over medium heat. Reserve 1 Tbsp in a small bowl.
3. Add onion and 1/4 tsp salt to the remaining butter and cook 5 minutes over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Sprinkle with flour and stir constantly for 1 minute. While stirring constantly, slowly pour in milk and stir until flour is completely dissolved. Bring just to a full simmer over medium-high heat, stirring frequently. Add the Gruyere, remaining salt, and nutmeg and stir until cheese is melted and sauce is bubbling. Remove the pot from heat.
4. Add spinach and stir until well-coated. Transfer to baking dish in even layer.
5. Add breadcrumbs and Parmesan to the reserved bowl of melted butter and stir to combine. Sprinkle spinach with breadcrumb mixture.
6. Bake until golden-brown on top, about 30 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes. Serve.

Winter/Spring CSA News

Mar 10-16, 2025
Week 8 of 17
Volume 22, No. 8

<u>Leafy Greens</u>: Store leafy greens in the fridge in a perforated plastic bag. If you chop and wash ahead of time, spin the leaves dry before putting back in the bag with a dry paper towel to absorb moisture. Refresh as needed by plunging them in ice water 15-20 minutes.

<u>Carrots</u>: Refrigerate in a plastic bag or other closed container. To freeze carrots: Chop, blanch for 3 minutes, rinse in cold ice water, drain, let dry, and pack in an airtight container.

<u>Sweet Potato</u>: Store at room temperature. Refrigeration will cause them to harden and blacken when cooked. Check weekly and use any that may soften, most will keep for weeks or months.

<u>Jarred Items</u>: It's the best time of year to include Elmwood's organic Diced Tomatoes, Marinara, BBQ or Salsa in your seasonal recipes—think chili, lasagna, soups, or what about as a pizza topping?

<u>Onions:</u> A staple of many kitchens, onions can be used in all its forms. The dried bulb that we often see this time of the year is popular, but also we can use any green sprout that comes out of that onion (yes, it's where we get green onions!) For longer storage, a dried onion can be stored in the refrigerator as long as it's a dry location without moisture.

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Listen to your Mother

Earthy aromas are arising from Elmwood Stock Farm again. Not only are we thawing out but the top few inches of soil have dried out, for the first time in a really, really long time. Under sunny skies we have sowed the first round of seeds over the past few weeks. While working the dirt, the robust smell of earth fills our senses. To some of you it may smell like just regular old dirt. But for the foodies and wine connoisseurs out there, you may know the term terroir, the name given to the connection between a crop's taste and the unique biome within which it was produced. I believe there's nothing in the world like the smell of our regular old dirt. A great deal of the satisfaction in doing this work is knowing the rich soil will enrich the lives of each of us.

While pondering the meaning of life and thinking on what's important, my conversations always seem to circle back to good health. We want our bodies to be nutritionally complete to give ourselves a fighting chance to fully enjoy the good things in life and overcome the bad things. We want that for the plants and animals in our care and for all of y'all too. This is why we farm the way we do.

It's a miracle every time a baby is born. I am fortunate to have witnessed, even participated in, hundreds of these momentous occasions (the livestock type, just to be clear). The choreography of organic chemistry at the cellular level is mind-boggling. With shifting hormonal waves and muscular gymnastics, babies eject themselves from the safe and warm into the cold and dangerous. The umbilicus is broken, and within minutes, the babies scramble to their feet and root around Mom's belly, yearning to reconnect. Once attached, the newborn suckles perfect food, colostrum. Not just milk, mind you: milk loaded with extra fat and antibodies, which allows them to begin the building of their gut microbiome. It's a miracle every time. We take our role in this seriously, and it's not for the faint-hearted.

A farmer's calling is to weave together the natural animal and plant biological systems. The behavior of animals in a farmer's care is based entirely on instinct. The number one biological principle to a newborn is "you are what you eat." From that first jolt of colostrum to milk to grass and clover, eating is all they know and all that matters. If that part goes well, usually everything else does too. When something goes terribly wrong, farmers are thankful to have veterinary medical assistance on-call. The first thing the vet will look for is the body condition of the patient. The second thing is the collective condition of herd or flock mates, followed by a pasture/hay/feed assessment. When Mom is otherwise healthy, the vet has more treatment options, which greatly improves chances of a full recovery.

One has to be careful in assessing humankind's connection to livestock; it's not helpful to assign those creatures humanlike characteristics they don't have, but neither should we pretend that we lack similarities to our four-legged friends. So, when we see optimum nutrition working well in the natural world, it's logical to think that it would work well for people also. The testimonials I can share are priceless. Customers beam with joy about how good they feel having joined our CSA. Interestingly, we now have real data to back up such anecdotal stories. A study by scientists from U of Ky and University of Michigan was published in 2017 that analyzed CSA shareholders' health outcomes. I'll cut to the ending: our CSA shareholders are spending time in their kitchens preparing and consuming awesome tasting foods rather than sitting in a doctor's office waiting room.

With all that scientists are learning about the human microbiome, the value of eating organic foods has never been more clear. Think of your digestive system as a gastronomic gymnasium. When you put a little effort into feeding the microbial athletes in your alimentary canal, the balance of amino acids, complex carbohydrates, and enzymes that fuel biochemical pathways invites your body to perform at peak efficiency. Akin to joining a gym for physical exercise, those that join our CSA find it enjoyable to consistently eat well. Long time farmers market customers that were hesitant to make the commitment of CSA now tell us they eat more fruits and veggies since they joined, empowering them in unexpected ways. And most farmers-market-shoppers-turned-CSA-members still shop the market regularly to fill out their weekly shopping and to swap stories with us.

With the capability to customize your Elmwood Stock Farm CSA share each week you can get more of what you like the most, and less of what you like the least. It makes no difference to us which type of salad greens you prefer, we just want you to get what you will eat more of for your good health. We are planting about the same mix of crops as we have in the past, making a few tweaks here and there based on what was popular in the CSA data from last year. We want to lead the way by helping you acquire a taste for new-to-you beneficial foods, hence our effort to include recipes in the weekly CSA share newsletters. Some of these recipes are nods to the chefs who have prepared our staff lunches over the years, as they've taught us new ways of enjoying everything from asparagus to zucchini.

We are blessed with wonderful soil, called 'good ground,' with which to work. We see how our regenerative organic farming practices build and feed the soil, which in turn feeds us, without the need for synthetic pesticides. Animal husbandry begins with good nutrition, avoiding the need for antibiotics or drugs. I do believe that if each of us eats well, we are doing all we can to ward off diet related diseases, without the use of pharmaceuticals, and even fight through insidious disease or trauma. It works that way out here on the farm with the mamas and the babies, and it can work for you too. Mother Nature knows best. - Mac Stone