

Lamb Preparation **(With A Little Bull)** (by Chuckwagon)

Featuring:

"Green River Grilled Lamb" (Marinated Grilled Leg Of Lamb)

"Ranch Leg O' Lamb" (Diminishing Heat - Pit Grilled - Boned Leg)

"Getaway Gulch Barbecued Lamb" (Greek-Style Lamb Skewers)

"Hog Leg Lamb" (Traditional Greek Lamb Stew)

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Greek Gyros

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The men-folk in our ranch outfit rode furiously two days, before our "sweet-talked" wives had the opportunity to change their minds 'bout lettin' us go! Organizing camp in drenching rain, we'd reached the high Uintahs with its crystal clear-blue lakes. Here remain a few scattered locations where man has never "set a foot" and the pan-sized rainbow, brook, and native cutthroat trout swim to the surface of the lakes and streams barking "catch me, catch me", then jump into your buttered hot black skillet!

The trick of catchin' these tasty fellas is to place a black iron skillet over a slow, up-wind fire, add garlic and butter, place a Green River Renegade (trout-catchin', hand-tied fly) into the skillet, then run and hide in the trees! Allow the aroma to drift across a lake a bit, waiting for the fish to leap right into the pan! When trout get just one whiff of the garlic, they stampede to the surface in herds rather than schools.

Our advice to beginners is to always bring along a "back up" cut of meat, just in case this carefully planned strategy fails. A shoulder of lamb will do nicely.

A heavy lightning storm will drive fish to the bottom of a lake for days at a time and Butch Cassidy's Carbon County "spinners" (dynamite sticks) won't bring 'em to the surface. Now shucks pards, everyone knows real cowboys don't dunk worms - they flyfish! So, we holed up inside a canvas wall tent, cheating at poker, and Black Jack "Si" Johnson, dealing from the bottom of the deck, was winning! Following three days of steadily pounding, unrelenting rain, I roasted a lamb shoulder over the glowing coals of a campfire spit.

Everything in camp was rain-soaked and our horses were beginning to shrink! I reached up beneath the boughs of firs (pines) to find dry tinder sticks with which to start a campfire. Next, I found semi-dry pine logs, beneath fallen trees in the deadfall of the forest. Knowing logs with dry centers would float in water, I simply tossed a few into the lake. The "floaters" had their bark removed with my hand axe and went into the fire. I shaved the bark from a heavy willow trunk about two feet long then drove two forked heavy willows into the wet ground to support the spit willow just above the coals. The lamb roast was prepared with punctures stuffed with garlic, rosemary, and lemon. Forty minutes before the lamb had thoroughly roasted, unpeeled potatoes went straight into the embers, along with buttered cobs of corn inside their soaked husks as Dusty Rhoades pulled out a ten-high straight flush of diamonds!

"Greenhorns" say lamb is an acquired taste. Obviously they've never had properly prepared succulent, tasty lamb grilled over a hickory-smoke ranch barbeque fire. The two most commonly made mistakes are overcooking the meat and not providing an escape for the excess tallow produced. Many folks say lamb is the best domestic meat of all. Others won't touch it, having experienced some jasper's disgustingly appalling mint jelly... served up with overcooked mutton - both good reasons to lynch the cook! Genuine lamb is not quite a year old and best roasted with pink centers in popular cuts. Mutton is the meat of a mature sheep best prepared in stews and slower cooked recipes. And mint jelly? It's a ghastly concoction invented by some hallucinating, bizarre, and misled individual pretending to be a cook while suffering seizures and convulsions from having a size 36 waist while wearing size 34 underwear!

Perfectly cooked lamb has a crispy, smoked, surface with a pink tender center. Being a bit delicate, it must not be overcooked for flavor at its best. This is exclusively the only way to serve lamb in the west, or anywhere else upon the planet earth! If you turn it into shoe leather, hang your head in shame for using too much heat for too long a period of time - and don't you dare throw it to your dogs! They haven't done anything to you! Bury it in the dirt and try again.

Lamb Cooking Temperatures:

- Really Rare = 131 degrees F. IMT
- Medium Rare = 141 degrees F. IMT
- Medium = 151 degrees F. IMT
- Medium Well = 160 degrees F. IMT
- Well Done - No such thing! (Don't Do It!) = 165 + degrees F. IMT

Lambs, Lemons, And Limes

Each year, Americans consume scarcely five hundred million lemons? That's only seven lemons per year for every man, woman, and child in the nation. I'm not sure about the statistics in other nations. What is the matter with us? Forget the awful green mint jelly and use lots of lamb's best seasoning - freshly squeezed lemon or limejuice with lots of rosemary and even more garlic.

The most popular cut of lamb is the whole leg, usually about seven or eight pounds with the "bone in", or five or six pounds with the bone removed. Either should be smoke-roasted for best results, using the age-old secrets of the Mediterranean. Yup, you guessed it... rosemary, butter, garlic, and lemon. Be sure to include and rub in plenty of olive oil, oregano, salt, pepper, and a little thyme. Cooking any meat with its bone attached will produce a more flavorful and moist result, and lamb is no exception.

Some folks prefer to have the bone removed before cooking. Here are a few basics:

- A butterflied leg of lamb is boneless and trimmed, having been opened up and slightly pounded flat by the butcher.
- A boneless roast loin comes in two pieces and each should be rolled and tied. This is the premier cut and is always lean and tasty.
- Loin chops include the bone and should be 1-1/2" thick or more.
- Lamb chunks are usually cut from the shoulder. Used in stews, a good butcher will include a few chunks from the leaner leg for your recipes. If the man does this, be sure to thank him by no longer riding your horse inside his store, not to mention shooting up his ceiling!

A rack of lamb is cut from the ribs. Its divine, expensive, and only feeds two cowboys. The whole leg serves eight, while the sirloin will satisfy six demanding gunslingers.

Lamb loin chops are usually grilled or fried, cut only an inch thick. Heat up a black skillet until it almost melts and rub olive oil well into the chops. When they hit the pan, fry them only a few minutes turning them only one time. Better yet, use your hot smoky grill, being sure to rotate the chops 90 degrees after only two minutes. After two more minutes, turn the chops over and cook them only three minutes more rotating them 90 degrees only once after a minute and a half.

Lamb is always served with pink meat inside! Don't overcook it in the Rockies or you may find some large, appalling person measuring your neck with a tape measure!

"Green River Grilled Lamb" (Marinated Grilled Leg Of Lamb)

- 1 leg of lamb (over 5 lbs.)
- 3 lemons (sliced)
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 8 cloves garlic (crushed)
- 1 tblspn. rosemary
- 1 tblspn. thyme
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 1 tspn. salt
- black pepper (freshly ground)

Zest one of the lemons, squeeze the juice from all three, and then slice them thinly. Mix the juice with the zest, wine, lemons, garlic, and seasonings then marinate the leg of lamb, covered and refrigerated for a day. Turn the lamb a few times a day to allow the flavors to penetrate the meat evenly. Many folks prefer to inject the liquid directly into the flesh a few hours before cooking the leg.

Using a drip pan beneath the grilling bars of a gas grill, roast the leg of lamb on a rotisserie using indirect heat and soaked chips of hickory to produce heavy smoke-smudge. Wrap the chips in a foil packet and place it directly upon a burner. Be sure to poke a few holes in the foil. After ninety minutes, begin checking the internal meat temperature with a baby dial thermometer. Baste the meat at intervals, using a little of the leftover marinade mixed with a little olive oil. The meat should be slightly pink inside the leg and served medium rare as the thermometer registers about 145 degrees F. Medium doneness is about 155 degrees. Slice the meat after it has rested ten minutes. Be sure to try this lamb cooked directly over the glowing coals of a wood-burning barbecue pit also. Experiment with alder or apple woods for smoking.

Lamb is getting more difficult to find and many butchers no longer place it on display. You must ask for it. If the butcher starts making excuses, be polite but insistent - threatening to lasso the manager and drag him through the creek then down aisle thirteen. More likely than not, he will place lamb back into the display case once again.

Roasting Lamb

The general guidelines for roasting lamb are simple. Barbecue a leg of lamb using indirect heat, 30 minutes per pound, inside a 325° F. (163° C.) barbecue pit. If you're inside the ranch house using your kitchen oven, preheat it to 400° F. (204° C.) then lightly oil a roasting pan. Place two sliced onions, lemon slices with juice, eight crushed garlic cloves, and three chopped tomatoes into the pan then place a roasting rack over them. Rub the lamb with lemon juice, olive oil, garlic powder, rosemary, salt, and pepper. Make several stabs into the meat placing garlic halves, lemon zest, and a few rosemary needles into each incision. Roast the lamb until the juices run clearly yet the center remains pink. Lamb is delicate. Please don't overcook it. The cooking time should only be about an hour and a half. The internal temperature of rare lamb is only 131° F. (55° C.), and medium rare, using your baby-dial thermometer, is about 135° F. (57° C.) Medium cooked lamb is 141° F. (61° C). There is no such thing as lamb well done.

If you're on the trail with your camp-style Dutch oven, apply the same know how. Use a cake rack to elevate the roast and remember to use a few charcoals on top of the oven for slow, uniform, cooking. Leave the lid slightly ajar to prevent steaming and be extra careful not to scorch the bottom vegetables. It's perfectly all right to "peek" in on this recipe once in a while. When you do, take its temperature with a baby-dial thermometer.

"Ranch Leg O' Lamb" **(Diminishing Heat - Pit Grilled - Boned Leg)**

Many folks prefer to remove the pelvic bone before roasting an entire 6 lb. leg of lamb, leaving the leg bone intact. Don't saw through the bone. One hour before roasting the leg, remove as much fat from it as possible without cutting into the flesh.

Make a paste of crushed garlic (lots of it), olive oil, your favorite chopped herbs (try rosemary, basil, and oregano), and a little salt, black pepper and red wine, then rub it well into the entire surface of the meat with your hands. Place whole, crushed, garlic cloves into incisions made in the meat. Our ranch outfit prefers wagonloads of garlic, rosemary, and lemons and folks have told us they could smell the aroma of the cooking meat long before they entered the canyon.

Using a pit thermometer, roast the leg upon a grill or slowly rotating spit suspended above the coals at 450 degrees F. for ten minutes with moist alder or hickory chips for smoke flavoring. Reduce the heat to 375 degrees F. and continue cooking for twenty more minutes without adding more smoke chips.

Reduce the heat again using a "slow fire" at 325 degrees F. and continue roasting the lamb for half an hour more. Reduce the heat once again, to 225 degrees F. and finish the cooking in twenty more minutes. Test the meat for smoke flavoring and doneness. It may be necessary to add more chips and cook the leg a little longer. The meat in the center of the lamb should be pink, but cooked.

Adjusting the heat of an open grill is a bit tricky at first and as there is nothing worse than overcooked lamb, you should pay constant attention to your fire. Again, roast the meat until it's just pink in the center and a little juicy. I've known cooks to spray water on the coals to reduce heat but end up with ashes all over the meat. A more practical method is to remove the spit temporarily and rake out a few coals or simply move the lamb further away from the heat source. However, as you develop your own cooking secrets, please remember: Never cook meat over the open flames of a campfire or a grill fire. Always use hot glowing coals.

"Getaway Gulch Barbecued Lamb" **(Greek-Style Lamb Skewers)**

Some of the finest friends I've had, and the nicest people I've known, are emigrants from literally every country in the world. Most early settlers of eastern Utah came to work in the coalmines or on the local railroad lines and as a result, coal-rich Carbon County has always been known as a "melting pot" of all peoples. Yup pards, this is where Butch Cassidy robbed the mine payroll and other desperados shot up our streets, a county attorney, and a couple of sheriffs. We've always enjoyed a special resolve here, as we simply have not experienced ethnic or cultural problems so prevalent in other communities. Somehow, everyone has always been respectful and courteous of one another's allegiances and backgrounds and I've always been truly grateful for such an intermixture of nationalities in eastern Utah. After all, these folks elected me their sheriff!

Forget about soaking bamboo sticks, purchase a nice set of stainless steel skewers, and try alder or apple wood for grill-roasting and smoking marinated lamb. In Greece, of course, trimmed olive branches are used. By the way, did you know that in ancient Greece, it was illegal to cut down an olive tree? Yup! And the penalty? Death!

Here are the ingredients for the marinade that "Gorgeous George" meticulously prepared. You may adjust the proportions yourself to cover the amount of meat you intend to baptize. Grill marinated lamb pieces on skewers, with staggered onions, green bell pepper chunks, and zucchini slices. Please don't "cram" all the pieces together on the skewers. Allow a little space between each item so the heat and smoke may penetrate the food.

"Gorgeous George's Marinated Lamb Skewers" (Greek White Wine Marinade)

- 1 cup dry Greek white wine or sherry
- 3/4 cup Greek "fermented cooking sauce" * (soy or Worcestershire is ok)
- 8 tblspns. minced garlic
- 1/2 tsp. lemon zest
- 2 tblspns. extra virgin olive oil
- juice of two lemons
- juice of one lime
- 3 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 1/2 tsp. thyme
- 1 tsp. minced parsley
- 1/2 cup very hot water

Shred the needles from a few sprigs of rosemary and place them into a half-cup of very hot water with the parsley, lemon zest, thyme, and minced garlic. When the water cools to room temperature, add all the other ingredients, placing the mixture into a plastic food storage bag, along with lamb cut into 1" squares. Marinate the lamb chunks an hour or two before placing them upon skewers with larger pieces of onions and green bell peppers having been brushed with olive oil and seasoned with salt and pepper. Include other favorite vegetables, chilies, or fruit and grill them above less hot coals with plenty of moistened hardwood chips or sawdust producing heavy smoke.

Greek Lamb Stew

Lamb cooked in the tradition of the Greeks in this part of the country is legendary and their recipes are certainly traced to the old country. Many of the best cowboys and sheep men in the west, have been of Greek decent. Simply ask anyone living in the Rockies. My ol' pal, George, a decorated war hero fighting the Nazis, immigrated to America following the war, where he owned and operated his Greek restaurant for years before passing

away. As a young sheriff, I spent much of my time in his restaurant kitchen, a place I called "Getaway Gulch", and affectionately, I called him "Gorgeous George". The much reserved, white-haired, skilled Renaissance man was a true sourdough and he chivalrously overlooked my raw inexperience as he took me beneath his wing to prepare Greek lamb recipes of all types.

Lamb stew should really be called "lamb soup". In the following recipe, cut the lamb into one-inch cubes and brown them inside a Dutch oven using a little olive oil. Some folks add a little lemon zest at this point. Add the green onions and the flour, stirring the mixture to cook the flour slightly. Care must be taken to avoid burning the green onions. Deglaze the cast iron using wine while scraping the bottom with a wooden spoon. Add the water, tomatoes, garlic, thyme, rosemary, parsley, and bay leaf and simmer the mixture an hour. Remove the meat and strain the liquid into a bowl. Place the lamb back into the Dutch oven with the strained liquid. Discard the strained solids then season the stew to taste with salt and pepper. In a large black skillet, melt the butter over medium low heat then add the carrots, turnips, garlic, and onions, sautéing them until they are browned only. Add the vegetables to the broth and lamb inside the Dutch oven, covering and simmering the lamb stew for 30 minutes until the meat is tender, adding more water as necessary. Skim off the fat and serve the lamb stew with your own rustic garlic toasted bread.

"Hog Leg Lamb" **(Traditional Greek Lamb Stew)**

- 4 lbs. lamb shoulder
- 2 tblspns. olive oil
- 4 tblspns. green onions (chopped)
- 2 tblspns. flour
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 3 cups water or stock
- 30 oz. tomatoes (diced)
- 6 large garlic cloves (minced)
- 1/2 tspn. thyme
- 1 tspn. rosemary
- 1/2 tspn. parsley flakes
- 1 bay leaf
- salt and pepper
- 6 carrots (shredded)
- 4 turnips (quartered)
- 1 rutabaga (large dice)
- 16 small white onions (peeled)
- 3 tblspns. butter

"Dry Gulch Garlic" Garlic Butter

- 1 cup butter (softened)
- 6 cloves roasted garlic (paste)
- 2 tblspns. parsley (finely minced)
- 2 tblspns. onion (finely chopped)
- 1/2 tspn. freshly ground black pepper

With one stroke of a sharp knife, cut the tops from multiple cloves of garlic, as they remain attached to their roots in whole heads. Do not separate the cloves or remove their paper. Wrap each head in aluminum foil and bake them inside a 325-degree F. oven for an hour. When baked and cooled, squeeze the cooked garlic pasty pulp (flesh) from each clove and discard the skins. Mix the paste with the butter, parsley, onion, and black pepper. Spread the mixture on slices of Italian baguette and toast them in a hot oven a few minutes.

"Lawman's Lamb Stew" (Western Lamb And Tomato Stew)

4 tblspns. tomato paste
1-cup chicken broth
1 tblspn. peanut oil
4 lbs. lamb stew meat
2 onions (chopped)
2 stalks celery (diced)
6 cloves garlic (minced)
1 beer
3/4 cup raisins
1/2 tspn. red pepper flakes
1 tspn. turmeric
1/4 tspn. black pepper.
40 oz. tomatoes (diced)

You'll quickly notice a smooth tomato-celery combination in this recipe. The beer adds the flavor of hops and grains. Mix the tomato paste with the chicken broth then set it aside. Cut the lamb into one-inch dice and sear the meat in hot peanut oil inside a "campfire pre-heated" Dutch camp oven. Reduce the heat by removing the oven from the coals temporarily. Add the onions, celery, and garlic, "threatening" them with the residual heat of the cast iron a minute or two only, while they give up their flavors. Add the tomato-broth mixture and continue cooking, placing the oven back over the hot coals of the fire. Add the remaining ingredients except the tomatoes, cover the oven, and simmer the stew sixty minutes, checking the heat frequently while stirring it occasionally. Finally, add the tomatoes, cover the oven, and simmer the stew thirty more minutes having replenished the charcoal briquettes upon the oven's lid.

This is another lamb stew recipe customarily made without heavy, thickened, gravy.

"Tumbleweed Stew" (Spring Lamb Stew)

- 2 lbs. boneless lamb shoulder
- 1/4-cup flour
- 1 tblspn. peanut oil
- 2 cups lamb or chicken stock
- 4 cloves garlic (minced)
- 1/2 tspn. salt
- 1/4 tspn. black pepper
- 1/4 tspn. dried thyme
- 1/2 tspn. basil
- 1/2 tspn. oregano

- 28 oz. tomatoes (chopped)
- 1 cup fresh (or frozen) green beans
- 1 cup fresh (or frozen) peas
- 2 yellow onions (sliced)

Here's lamb stew with fresh spring green beans and peas. Of course, you may use frozen vegetables if spring is yet a few months away. Cut the lamb into three-quarter inch dice and coat the pieces with flour. Heat the oil inside a Dutch oven over medium heat and brown the lamb. Add the stock, garlic, salt, pepper, and thyme, reduce the heat, cover the oven, and simmer the stew sixty minutes, stirring it occasionally. Finally, add the basil, oregano, tomatoes, green beans, peas, and onions, cover the oven and simmer 15 more minutes or until the vegetables become tender. For maximum flavor, remember to saute' and caramelize the onions before adding them to the stew.

Greek Festival Days And Lamb Stew

As far back as I'm able to remember, each August, the Greek folks in Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, and Colorado began sharpening their knives, collecting loads of garlic, hoarding rosemary, and diligently shopped for California lemons. It was (and is) Greek Festival Days and people attend from all over the west! Building a huge pavilion shelter near the Greek Church in Price, Utah, the festival easily handles hundreds of people at a time. Later during the month, they move the festivities to Salt Lake City and do it all over again!

One must show up early, as there is always a line of folks waiting to get in. What a celebration it is, as all the wonderful older Greek ladies born in the old country show the youngsters how to prepare the delicacies for which they've become famous. The men roast and grill lamb while the women prepare grape leaves, stews, gyros, suvlaki, and other tasty tidbits of fine Greek culture. Everyone's favorite seems to be grilled lamb on a stick and multi-cultured folks just sit down and talk about the festival, enjoying each other's company. If you attend, please try the gyros and Greek lamb stew. Often hangin' around Gorgeous George and others of Greek ancestry, I learned how to prepare great Greek food when I was younger - not a bad endeavor for a pudgy little Swiss boy, eh?

The very best Greek Lamb Stew requires a little planning and preparation. First, slowly roast a leg of lamb using as much garlic, rosemary, and lemons as you can possibly load into the back of your pickup truck! Use a little sage with onion too. When the meat begins to separate from the bones, dice and reserve it. Kick up the heat and continue to roast the bone several hours.

Make your Greek Lamb Stew inside a large Dutch oven, preparing a "simmerin' sauce" by slowly cooking 1/2 cup burgundy wine with slices of a fresh yellow onion, 1/2 teaspoon of thyme, a bay leaf, three crushed cloves of garlic, and a teaspoon of fresh rosemary. When the bone is well cooked, simmer it in the sauce and add as much lamb stock as you desire. Having refrigerated the mixture, skim off the fat. Strain the solids, add the lamb dice with chopped fresh parsley, shredded carrot, (try parsnip or turnip too) with frozen green peas, then simmer the stew until the carrots are barely tender. Wow, it just doesn't get better than this!

"Robber's Roast Rack" (Rack Of Lamb)

- 1 full rack of lamb (and don't peel the bones!)
- extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tblspns. rosemary (chopped)
- 2 tblspns. thyme (chopped)

- salt and pepper
- 1 cup red wine
- 3 cloves garlic (chopped)
- 1 tblspn. butter

Sheep have always naturally produced lambs in March and April. Now days, modern animal husbandry allows for lamb of varying ages to be available year round. As sheep age and mature, their meat becomes darker, gamier tasting, and less tender. Lamb is far more popular in other parts of the world, particularly the Mediterranean, than it is inside the United States. The average American scarcely consumes about a pound of lamb per year, with the rack of lamb, cut from the rib section, being almost everyone's favorite. Why do Americans persist in not cooking rabbits or lamb? What is wrong with us?

Whenever particular folks order a rack of lamb inside an classy restaurant, they invariably receive an expensive full rack containing eight ribs with the bones "Frenched", having the meat scraped away from the tips for a nice appearance. It is time to shoot the cook again as any legitimate, literate, lamb lover on the level will tell you that the best part of feasting on rack of lamb is nibbling on the bones afterward. The bones are delectable, and even though propriety should restrain a well-mannered cowpoke from gnawing on them in public, stark concerns of etiquette often cheat a genuine mutton maniac out of a delicious snack the following day. We should lynch the dude who decided naked bones look better than meaty ones. Assuming four chops will serve one person, one rack will feed two people.

The chine bone, part of the spine, if not removed, will prevent the cutting of individual chops. Ask your butcher to remove it or do it yourself. Trim only part of the excess fat from the rack as some of it is needed to naturally baste the meat as it cooks. Lightly brush the meat with olive oil, then sprinkle both sides with half of the rosemary, thyme, salt, and pepper. Place the rack into a large Dutch oven or cast iron roasting pan, with a grate on the bottom, and cook it at 375 degrees F. Forget the cooking time and cook the lamb by registering its temperature frequently. Remove the lamb when a thermometer placed dead center inside the meat reads 125° F. degrees for rare, 130° F. for medium rare, and 135° F. for medium. Remove the roast from the Dutch oven, place it upon a serving platter, cover it with aluminum foil, and allow it to rest while the meat re-absorbs its juices. Don't even think about cooking the lamb any longer!

For sauce, place the Dutch oven over hot coals or a high burner, add the wine, bring it to a boil and deglaze the fond, scraping the browned bits from the bottom. Add the remaining rosemary and thyme, garlic, salt and pepper. Reduce the sauce to at least half, add the butter at the end, and then strain it. Carve the roast into individual chops and pour the sauce over them. For a delicious variation, you may substitute homemade beef or veal stock for the wine, or use a combination of stock and wine.

"Bootjack's Broiled Baa-Baa" (Broiled Lamb)

A "bootjack" is a pivoted plank of wood with a leather-lined notched "V" cut into one end where a cowboy places the heel of each boot to easily remove both at the end of a hard day. "Bootjack" Henry came from western Canada where his face appeared upon various wanted posters. We didn't ask, and he didn't explain. We instantly liked the personable man as he proved himself to be an experienced and reliable ranch hand, and an outstanding cook. Bootjack tucked his pant legs inside his boots, buttoned his shirt collar, parted his slicked-down hair in the middle, and everyone teased him about style that had gone out with the stagecoach to Tucson... that is, until he put lamb cuts on the grill to broil. Whenever the other ranch hands began combing their hair and tuckin' in their pant cuffs, they could depend on broiled lamb for supper, knowing the secrets of great broiled chops never go out of style. Bootjack's favorite ol' sourdough tricks included butterflying the cuts

then marinating them three hours in any real wine with garlic, lemon, rosemary, and other favorite spices and herbs. The meat was drained and the marinade was brought to a boil and used later in the basting process. Bootjack mixed a rub with salt, pepper, and something he called "necessary and imperative" - a mixture of fresh rosemary, garlic powder (not garlic salt), grated lemon rind, and oregano. The ol' cow-cusser broiled the lamb four inches from the heat source for four minutes, then, turning the meat over, six inches from the heat source for six minutes. He sliced a piece to see if the center was barely pink, knowing he may have had to char the surface just a bit longer by placing the meat closer to the heat source.

Greek Gyros

Gyros, (pronounced "yuros"), are delicious wraps of lamb, cheese, vegetables, and a special Greek "Tzatziki sauce made with yogurt, garlic, lemon, and cucumber. Large restaurants stack pounds of lamb onto vertical rotisseries and slowly roast the meat as it turns (consequently the name gyro), shaving off long, perfectly roasted crispy strips. Highly spiced with oregano and onion, the mixture is bound by Pita pocket bread.

Here's an authentic Pita bread recipe I stole from a Greek Goddess after she broke my heart more years ago than I care to remember. In the Middle East, this recipe (in Arabic) is called Khyubz. The Greeks call it Pita in the west. The bread is soft, chewy, absorbent, easily reheated, and the hollow pouch is perfect for wrapping Lamb Gyros. Store unused bread in plastic bags to keep it from drying out. Don't confuse Greek "Pita" with Turkish-made "Pide" bread, made with similar ingredients but with added black sesame seeds and egg glaze.

"Ranch House Pita Bread" (Greek Pita Bread Made In The Ranch Oven)

- 2 tspns. dry yeast
- ½ tspn. sugar
- 1-1/4 cups water
- 3-3/4 cups bread flour
- 1 tspn. sea salt
- 2 tblspns. olive oil

Add the yeast, having checked the expiration date, and sugar to half the water, stir to dissolve it, and allow it stand five minutes. Mix the salt with the flour inside a large bowl and make a "well" in the center of the mixture. Pour in the dissolved yeast and the olive oil and start mixing the ingredients together. Add the remaining water a little at a time as needed to make a firm, soft dough.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead it about fifteen minutes. The dough will soften a bit as you work with it. Place the dough into a lightly oiled bowl and turn it to coat the dough evenly. Cover the mixture with a dishtowel and allow it to rise 1-1/2 hours. Punch the dough down and allow it to rest ten minutes.

Divide the dough into eight equal pieces and shape each piece into a ball. Roll out each dough ball on a lightly floured surface, forming quarter-inch thick ovals each about nine inches long. Cover the ovals with a dishtowel and allow them to proof twenty minutes while they rise slightly.

Dust two baking sheets with flour and preheat them to 425 degrees F. for five minutes. Place the ovals onto the baking sheets and return them immediately to the hot oven. Bake the Pitas from five to ten minutes until they puff and begin to turn golden brown. Remove the Pitas from the oven and wrap them in a clean, dry cloth to

keep the crusts soft and the bread moist. If you prefer whole-wheat Pitas, substitute $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the white flour in the recipe with whole-wheat flour.

“Pistolero’s Pita” (Greek Pita Bread For Lamb Gyros On The Trail)

- 3 cups white flour
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup tepid water (about 110 degrees F.)
- 1 packet of yeast (check the expiration date)
- 1 tspn. honey or sugar
- 1 tspn. salt
- 1 tspn. olive oil

In a large bowl, stir the yeast, whole-wheat flour, and the honey (or sugar) into the water and allow it to proof ten minutes. Add two cups of the white flour with the salt and stir the mixture into a batter. With your hands, mix in the remaining cup of flour and the olive oil and knead the mixture into dough.

Cover the bowl with a towel and allow the dough to rise for an hour or until it has doubled in volume. Punch down the dough, transfer it to a floured surface, and knead it a bit. Divide the dough into 6 ball pieces making sure you have plenty of flour on your work surface. Roll each ball flat, only 1/16” thin, allowing the circles to rest for half an hour. If you are at home, preheat your oven to 500 degrees F. On the trail, use a very hot black iron skillet or camp-style Dutch oven. Many times, I’ve flipped over the lid of a camp Dutch oven, placing it upon the very hot coals of my campfire. It made a fine pita “griddle”.

Always allow any cooking utensil to completely heat up before placing food upon or inside it. Spread a little cooking oil upon the surface and bake pita bread at a very hot 500 degrees! At this temperature, the bread’s surface will quickly brown as its soft interior bakes. To maintain the supple texture of each pita, place them into a paper bag and close it. When they’ve cooled, slice them in half and open the pockets with a table knife.

“Getaway Gulch Gyros” With “Tzatziki sauce” (Greek Lamb Gyros)

- 1 lb. lamb (ground)
- 2 tblspns. yogurt (for marinating lamb)
- 1 slice of day old white bread
- 2- tblspns. milk
- 1-tblspn. olive oil
- 1-cup onion (minced)
- 1-cup red onions (sliced)
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- 4 tblspns. lemon juice
- 1 tspn dried oregano
- 1 tspn ground cumin
- 1 cucumber (seeded and finely diced)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup nonfat yogurt (drained) for Tzatziki Sauce
- 1 tspn. fresh mint (finely chopped)
- 1 cup shredded lettuce
- 1 cup tomato (diced)
- Feta cheese (crumbled)
- 4 “Pistolero’s Pita” or “Ranch House Pita” breads

Marinate the lamb in a couple of tablespoons of yogurt overnight then shake off the excess yogurt. Soak the bread slice with the 2 tablespoons of milk and crush it into a panade with a fork. Using your hands, mix the bread panade well with the marinated ground lamb. Saute' the onion and garlic in the olive oil then place the mixture into a bowl with the lamb, oregano, and cumin. Mix the ingredients thoroughly then shape four thin patties. Grill the patties only a couple of minutes on each side over medium low direct heat with a little hickory smoke, while you make a "Tzatziki sauce" combining the cucumber, yogurt, lemon juice and mint in small bowl. Cut around the edge of each pita bread and pull them open to form pockets. Fill each pita with the lettuce, red onion slices, tomato, lamb, Feta cheese, and the yogurt Tzatziki mixture. Grilled chicken breasts, marinated overnight in yogurt, cut into large dice, may be substituted for the lamb, as some misinformed, hoodwinked, and persnickety folks just don't seem to care for good lamb.

Best Wishes,
Chuckwagon