

Lamb Shoulder with Ras el Hanout

I'm not at all sure this is a genuine Moroccan approach but the intention is clearly Moroccan. Very slow cooking is definitely my preferred method with lamb shoulder 'cos it makes for a meltingly tender result. The Moroccan flavourings used here give an interesting little twist to a popular cut of meat compared with the more usual garlic and rosemary approach.

I have adjusted the temperature and cooking a time since I was having trouble cooking it as long as originally suggested [4-5hrs] without it burning on the bottom of my roasting pan.

Planning

serves:	6
prep time:	20 mins
cooking time:	3 hrs

Ingredients

For the lamb shoulder:

1 whole large shoulder of lamb, on the bone
2 tbs ras el hanout
50ml olive oil
2 large onions, roughly chopped
small bunch fresh thyme sprigs

6 cloves garlic, unpeeled
3 tbs clear honey

For the couscous:

350g couscous
1 chicken stock cube
1 small red onion, finely chopped
10 cherry tomatoes, quartered
2 tbs raisins
2 tbs flaked almonds
2 tbs freshly chopped flat leaf parsley
2 tbs freshly chopped coriander leaves
juice of ½ lemon
2 tbs olive oil
Salt & pepper

Method

Preferably the day before cooking, prick the lamb shoulder all over with a skewer or sharp knife. Mix the ras el hanout with the olive oil and some salt & pepper. Rub this mixture all over the shoulder and set in the fridge overnight, loosely covered, to absorb some flavour. If you can't do it the day before, give it at least 2 hours.

The lamb. On the day of cooking, preheat your oven to 150°C/300°F/gas 2 [originally 140°C/275°F/gas 1]. Place the onions, garlic and thyme on the bottom of a lightly oiled roasting pan and sit the lamb on top. Cover tightly with foil and bake in the oven for 3 hours [originally 4-5 hrs]. (Check every hour or so to ensure the onions and garlic are not burning - lower the heat if they are.) Drain the fat a couple of times during cooking. Remove the foil for the final 45 minutes of cooking.

The couscous. Here is my only use of dehydrated stock powder/cubes. Dissolve a chicken stock cube in 400mls boiling water. Put the couscous into a large glass bowl, tip in the liquid and give it a good stir. Cover with cling film and let it soak for 5 minutes. Fluff up the grains with a fork, then stir in the remaining ingredients. Adjust the seasoning.

Lift the lamb onto a chopping board and shred the meat off the bone using a couple of forks. Pile the couscous on a large serving dish and top it with the shredded lamb. Drizzle over the honey and serve.