

Olive Recipes

Kitchen Garden Magazine, March 1998

"Olive Odyssey"

by Maggie Klein

Braised Lamb Shanks with Dry-Cured Olives

4 SERVINGS

To offset the richness of this dish, I serve plainly prepared potatoes, like steamed fingerlings or some 'Yellow Finns' with their skins left on, cut up, tossed in olive oil, salt, and pepper, and baked until browned just a bit. A simple salad and a light dessert complete the meal.

4 cracked lamb shanks

Salt and pepper

Flour

4 Tbs. olive oil

1 medium yellow onion, chopped

1 garlic bulb, cloves crushed and peeled

2 carrots, peeled and chopped

1/2 cup dry white wine

A few springs of thyme

4 canned tomatoes

3 strips orange zest (opt.)

1/2 cup water

1/3 lb. dry-cured black olives

1/4 cup Italian parsley, chopped fine

Trim the fat from the lamb shanks. Season well with salt and pepper, and dredge in flour. Heat the oil in a heavy 12-in. pan, preferably cast iron or enamel-coated cast iron, with a tight-fitting lid. Brown the shanks on all sides over medium heat; this should take at least half an hour. Remove the shanks from the pan and lower the heat.

In the same pan, sauté the onion, garlic, and carrots until the onion turns golden. Deglaze the pan with the wine, scraping all the browned bits from the bottom. Add several springs of fresh thyme, the canned tomatoes, broken up, with their juice, orange zest, and the water. Stir. Lay the shanks in the pot, pushing them down into the liquid. When the liquid just simmers, cover tightly. After an hour, add the olives. If the liquid has evaporated markedly, add water and stir. Cook covered one hour more. Garnish with chopped parsley.

Tapenade

MAKES 1 CUP

This is a basic tapenade recipe that can be varied in many ways. Chop black olives coarse, and it can be used as a stuffing for boned leg of lamb. Or spread it on a swordfish steak after you have turned it on the grill. Made with green olives, it can be used on crostini (see note) or whisked into a vinaigrette.

1/2 lb. (before pitting) cracked green olives
2 Tbs. capers
2 anchovies (preferably salt packed), torn into pieces
1 clove garlic
Pinch of cayenne
Pinch of fresh savory or thyme
3 to 5 Tbs. mild extra-virgin olive oil

Pit the olives. Put all the ingredients and 3 Tbs. olive oil into a food processor. Pulse until tapenade is the desired texture, adding more oil if necessary.

NOTE: To make crostini, heat the oven to 350 degrees F. Cut a loaf of sourdough bread into slices 1/3 in. thick, brush both sides with olive oil, and toast for 5 to 7 min., until golden.

Winter Salade Niçoise

4 SERVINGS

I use the term Salade Niçoise loosely here, for there are those who think a niçoise is a salad that always contains tomatoes (and winter is surely not the season for tomatoes) and never includes potatoes. Others would disagree, saying that it can be adapted to the seasons.

2/3 lb. fresh tuna
Extra-virgin olive oil
4 bay leaves
Peppercorns

Vinaigrette

1 finely minced shallot
2 Tbs. champagne or white wine vinegar
1/2 Tbs. lemon juice
6 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 tsp. salt
Freshly ground pepper

Salad

One head of lettuce
2 carrots, peeled and sliced thin
1 turnip or rutabaga, peeled and julienned
1 celery root, peeled and julienned
Juice of 1/2 lemon
2 medium red potatoes, unpeeled and sliced
2 hard boiled eggs, halved
4 anchovy fillets (preferably salt-packed)
Small handful of Niçoise olives, or combination Niçoise and small brine-cured cracked green

To cook the tuna, cover it with olive oil in a small pot just large enough in diameter to contain it. Add bay leaves and peppercorns. Slowly heat the oil and simmer the tuna in it until just cooked, 7 to 10 min. Remove from flame.

Combine all of the vinaigrette ingredients in a small bowl and whisk to combine.

Line a large, low pottery bowl with washed and dried lettuce leaves and set aside.

Blanch carrots in boiling salted water for 2 min. Drain and refresh under cold running water. Pat dry and in a small bowl toss them with 1 Tbs. vinaigrette. Do the same with the turnip or rutabaga. Put the celery root in a small bowl, lightly salt it, squeeze the lemon juice over it, and toss.

Cover the potato slices with cold water and slowly bring to a boil. Add salt. Cook until just done. Drain, and refresh under cold water. Toss with 3 Tbs. vinaigrette.

Distribute the vegetables artfully over the lettuces. Flake the tuna in large chunks and add to the salad. Garnish with eggs, anchovies, and olives. Drizzle the vinaigrette over all to taste. Serve with a baguette or sourdough country bread.