

## **Walnut-Encrusted Spring Lamb with Bacon-Potato Rösti served with 2003 Grant Burge, "Miamba," Shiraz, Barossa Valley, Australia**

**by Frank McClelland and Christie Matheson**

Full, rich, and spicy, this is a classic Australian red wine. Shiraz and lamb is an excellent combination. You could try a Shiraz from South Africa or a California Syrah, too.

This has been a L'Espalier staple for decades. The nuttiness and sweetness of the crust enhances the richness and sweetness of the spring lamb. The rösti lends crispness to this dish and creates a platform to absorb the sweet juices from the lamb. To add a green element to this course, serve it with spring spinach.

3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
3 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
3 garlic cloves, minced  
3 tablespoons olive oil, plus more if needed  
1 teaspoon dried thyme  
1 teaspoon dried rosemary  
2 racks of lamb (about 18 ounces total)  
3 tablespoons butter  
1 large onion, thinly sliced  
1 tablespoon brown sugar  
2 teaspoons salt, plus more to season lamb  
4 garlic cloves, chopped  
4 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary  
2 teaspoons minced fresh mint  
1 cup walnuts, lightly toasted  
1/4 cup breadcrumbs  
1 teaspoon coarse sea salt  
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, plus more to season lamb  
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1. Make a marinade by combining the balsamic vinegar, mustard, minced garlic, 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, the thyme, and the dried rosemary. Place the lamb in a bowl and smear the marinade all over the meat. Refrigerate, covered, overnight.

2. Heat a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the butter to the pan. When the butter is sizzling, add the onions, brown sugar, and salt and stir. Cover and let cook for 10 minutes.

3. Uncover and add the chopped garlic, fresh rosemary, mint, walnuts, breadcrumbs, salt, pepper, 1 tablespoon olive oil, and sherry vinegar. Stir and cook for 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and puree in a food processor until smooth. If the mixture crumbles, add more olive oil. (You want to be able to apply the mixture to the lamb with an offset spatula.)

4. Preheat the oven to 400°F.

5. Remove the lamb from the marinade. Season the lamb with salt and pepper. Wipe out the sauté pan and set it over medium-high heat. Add the vegetable oil to the pan. When the oil is hot, add the lamb to the pan and brown it deeply on all sides, about 4 minutes total.

6. Place the lamb on a roasting rack in a roasting pan. Use an offset spatula to cover the lamb completely with the walnut-herb mixture. Roast for about 12 minutes for medium-rare (about 135°F on an instant-read thermometer). Remove from the oven and let stand for 5 minutes before slicing and serving. Serve with Bacon-Potato Rösti (recipe follows).

### **Toasting Nuts**

Toasting nuts brings out their best flavor. To toast them lightly, spread them evenly on a baking sheet and bake for 5 minutes in a 400°F oven. For more intense toasted flavor, bake for 8 to 10 minutes.

### **Bacon-Potato Rösti**

3 Idaho potatoes (about 2 1/2 pounds), peeled  
2 slices bacon, finely diced  
1 tablespoon salt  
1 garlic clove, minced  
3 tablespoons minced onion  
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) butter

1. Grate the potatoes, using the large holes of a grater, into a large bowl. Let stand for 4 minutes. Lift the potatoes and squeeze out and discard the excess liquid. Return the potatoes to the bowl and stir in the bacon. Mix in the salt, garlic, onion, and pepper.

2. Preheat the oven to 400°F.

3. Heat a large ovenproof skillet over medium heat. Add 2 tablespoons of the butter to the skillet and, when it starts to pop, evenly distribute the potato-bacon mixture in the skillet. Let cook until the potato cake becomes golden brown and begins to detach from the pan.

4. Distribute the remaining 2 tablespoons butter, cut into bits, on top of the potato cake. Flip the cake and place the skillet in the oven. Roast for 15 minutes. Remove the rösti from the skillet and slide it onto a cutting board. Cut it into 6 wedges and serve with the lamb.