



T's Braised Lamb Shanks

Makes 6 servings

6 lamb shanks (approximately 4 pounds)
2½ teaspoons salt, divided
¼ teaspoons ground black pepper, divided
5 tablespoons all-purpose flour
12 tablespoons (1½ sticks) butter, divided
4 tablespoons vegetable oil
4 cups chopped onion
1 cup diced celery
1 cup diced carrots
2½ cups chicken stock, divided
2½ cups red wine, divided
1 teaspoon dried thyme
2 bay leaves
1 (28-ounce) can San Marzano tomatoes in juice

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place the lamb shanks in a large mixing bowl, and add 2 teaspoons of the salt, and 1 teaspoon of the black pepper. Toss the shanks well to make sure every bit of the salt and pepper is absorbed into the lamb. Add the flour, and toss the lamb to coat it thoroughly.

Melt 8 tablespoons of the butter with the oil in a Dutch oven or large heavy skillet over medium-high heat. When the foaming has subsided, add the shanks. You may need to do this in batches to avoid crowding the pan. If you crowd the pan, you will steam the meat instead of browning it.

Brown, and I mean *really* brown, the shanks in the butter and oil on all sides until they are crusty, about 15 to 20 minutes. Be patient and pay attention, as this is truly the most important step of this dish. Transfer the browned shanks to a 9 by 13-inch baking dish and let them cool slightly.

Reduce the heat to low and add the remaining 4 tablespoons butter. Do not let the butter burn. The Dutch oven will be very hot. When the foaming has subsided, add the onions and sauté them for approximately 2 minutes, until they are just slightly translucent, and then add the celery and carrots. Sauté for 10 to 12 minutes more, until the vegetables are just barely soft.

Remove the cooked vegetables and all the pan juices to the baking dish or Dutch oven with the browned shanks, and then pour in 1½ cups of the chicken stock, and 1½ cups of the red wine. Add the remaining ½ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon black pepper, and the thyme. Top the dish with the 2 bay leaves, spaced equally on top. Cover and bake the shanks in the preheated oven for 3 hours.

After 3 hours, add the remaining 1 cup chicken stock, 1 cup red wine, and the canned tomatoes and their juice. Cover and return to the oven for another 3 hours. After 6 hours total cooking time, remove the shanks from the oven, keep them covered, and let them rest for 25 minutes. Uncover them, discard the bay leaves, and use tongs to transfer the shanks to a serving platter. Spoon the vegetables and sauce over them, then serve.

Note: These shanks are infinitely better if they are cooked at least one day ahead, preferably two or three. Reheat them, covered, at 325°F for 45 minutes to an hour before serving.

My grandfather, here in his World War I uniform, 1917, loved this lamb so much, he and T stayed married for sixty-three years.

