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CHURRASCO

GRILLING THE BRAZILIAN WAY

CAREGNATO

GIBBS SMITH

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GRILLING THE BRAZILIAN WAY

EVANDRO CAREGNATO

Culinary Director of TEXAS DE BRAZIL®

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Roasted Leg of Lamb

Pernil de Ovelha

Some time ago, our lamb supplier confided that Texas de Brazil—and churrascarias in general—have done more for the lamb business in the United States than any other type of restaurant. And he was correct. If you dine at a traditional steakhouse, there is a good chance that lamb chops will be on the menu, but since they are usually expensive, the majority of diners prefer to play it safe and order filet mignon or rib eye. In a churrascaria, however, guests have the opportunity to try several different varieties and cuts of meat; they will always try the lamb—and they love it. Many of our guests have admitted that it had been "an eternity" since they ordered lamb, and that they didn't remember how good it could be. They recall lamb being mostly gamy and without much taste, but not so with the lamb we serve.

A whole leg of lamb roasted over an open flame will make a satisfying meal for you and your family and make a great impression on your guests.

MAKES 8 TO 10 SERVINGS

- 1 (5 lb/2.3 kg) semi-boneless leg of lamb
- ¼ cup (34 g) kosher salt
- ¾ cup (180 ml) Texas de Brazil marinade (page XX)
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 12 cloves garlic, minced
- Oven roasted potatoes or mashed potatoes for serving

Place the leg of lamb on a cutting board. Place the tip of a chef's knife next to the femur (thigh bone) and push the knife down, parallel to the bone—this creates a cavity inside the leg that will hold the marinade and salt. Rub the kosher salt generously all over the leg and inside the cavity. Pour the marinade over the lamb and spread it with your fingers so that the meat is covered and the marinade enters the cavity. Cover the lamb in plastic wrap and allow to marinate in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours, but preferably overnight.

When ready to cook, prepare the grill with lump charcoal.

While the charcoal is heating, skewer the lamb with a heavy stainless-steel skewer, starting from the shank end and crossing through the leg.

Chop the rosemary and mix it with the garlic by smashing both with the side of a large knife—this will form a paste. Spread this paste all over the lamb, then transfer the skewered meat to the fire, about 18 inches from the heat. Cook for about 1 hour over medium heat. The lamb will be ready when the outside achieves a beautiful dark-gold color—the rosemary and specks of perfectly golden garlic should be visible—and the interior of the lamb is about 140°F. The meat around the bone in the middle of the leg should be pink in color, not red (undercooked) or gray (overcooked). Transfer the meat to a serving platter or cutting board, and let it rest for 15 minutes before carving. Serve with a side of oven-roasted or mashed potatoes.

If you are cooking the lamb with other meats, keep in mind that it takes much longer to cook a whole leg than it does smaller cuts. Plan the cooking time of each meat in advance so that all the cuts will be done at the same time.

Whole Fish Baked on a Roof Tile

Tainha na Telha

Tainha is a fish from the same family as the mullet and can be found all over Brazil. Many small towns hold annual festivals showcasing this fish and its unique preparation. The locals dig long, shallow ditches in which charcoal is placed and burned. Once the embers are ready, the fish is placed on roof tiles and cooked in the ditch. (These curved tiles are available at home improvement stores.) Many people believe the roof tile gives the dish a distinctive and earthy flavor. The presentation is dramatic, and the technique has some similarities to the way we prepare churrasco: it is a simple and rustic cooking method, it requires fire, and it allows you to drink and converse with friends while waiting for the fish to cook through. Here we will show you how to prepare the fish in the oven, but if you don't mind digging a ditch in your backyard, you can throw a party that your friends will remember for years to come. Since the tomato and onions in this dish form a very tasty sauce, it's usually eaten with boiled potatoes or white rice.

SERVES 4

- 4 unglazed clay roof tiles or unglazed terra-cotta tiles, long enough to hold each fish (alternatively, you can use a large clay pot, available at kitchen and gourmet stores)
- 4 whole medium-sized (about 2 lb/900 g) red snappers, mullet, or branzinos, scaled and gutted
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 sprig thyme or marjoram
- 2 small yellow onions, thinly sliced
- 4 tablespoons (56 g) minced garlic
- 4 medium tomatoes, seeded, crushed, and roughly chopped
- ½ cup (25 g) chopped scallions, white and green parts
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- ½ cup (120 ml) olive oil, divided
- 2 lemons, halved
- 4 tablespoons chopped fresh parlsey
- ½ cup (90 g) capers, rinsed and dried

You will need 1 clay roof tile for each fish. Rinse the tiles very well but avoid using any soap.

Dry the tiles, place them in the oven, and heat the oven to 375°F for 10 minutes.

Season the interior of the fish with salt and pepper, place a sprig of thyme inside each fish, and set aside. Using oven mitts, remove the tiles from the oven and place side by side on a heatproof surface. Divide the ingredients in equal parts between the tiles in this order: onions, garlic, tomatoes, scallions, and oregano. Season the vegetables with salt and pepper.

Place 1 fish on top of each vegetable mix. Drizzle the fish with ¼ cup of the olive oil, and season the skin of the fish with more salt and pepper. Place the tiles back in the oven, and place a pan under the tiles to catch any running liquid. Bake the fish for about 25 minutes, until fully cooked but not dry.

Remove the tiles from the oven. Squeeze a lemon half over each fish, top with parsley and capers, and drizzle with the remaining ¼ cup olive oil. Serve the fish on the tile.

If you want to cook the fish over embers outdoors, you will need to find a safe place to dig a ditch and burn charcoal. Dig a long, straight ditch about 4 inches deep x 12 inches wide (10 x 30 cm) (or large enough to accommodate the amount of tiles you will be using). Spread about 10 pounds of charcoal in the ditch and light. Once the charcoal is glowing, place the tiles with the fish over the charcoal, and cover the tiles loosely with aluminum foil. Check the fish every 10 minutes until it is cooked and flaky.

Boiled Beef with Horseradish-Vinegar Sauce

Carne Alessa com Cren

During my first week in the United States, I was served a creamy white sauce to accompany the roast beef I ordered; I was pleased to discover that it was made with cren, the same root we love in my home town, only prepared in a completely different way. Horseradish is relatively unknown in Brazil, except in the south where I was raised. During the winter, my grandma would make a huge pot of broth with brisket, and after hours of boiling, she would skim the fat, remove the meat, and use this tasty clear broth to cook homemade soup with cappelletti—a stuffed pasta similar to tortellini. The leftover meat was tender, but it had a rich flavor. To cut the fattiness, we always ate it with a strong homemade vinegar combined with grated horseradish that was left to cure for a few days. The boiled brisket paired with the vinegary horseradish was celebrated as much as the soup. I recommend this dish for Sunday supper on a cold day—it is very comforting, easy to make, and will fill the house with a gentle, steamy aroma. Plan ahead for making this dish as the horseradish vinegar will need to be prepared one week in advance.

SERVES 8 TO 10

For the horseradish vinegar:

1 cup (230 g) freshly grated horseradish root or prepared white horseradish

1 cup (240 ml) good-quality strong red wine vinegar

For the boiled beef:

1 (2–3 lb) beef brisket, external fat completely removed, cut into 6 pieces

1 unpeeled yellow onion, halved

2 carrots, peeled and halved

1 leek, halved

4 cloves garlic, crushed

10 black peppercorns

2 tablespoons kosher salt

1 bunch Italian parsley

1 gallon (3.8 l) water

2 lb (900 g) Yukon potatoes, peeled

Finely chopped fresh chives, for serving

To make the horseradish vinegar, place the grated horseradish in a large Mason jar and cover with the red wine vinegar. (If you are using jarred horseradish, strain or squeeze out the excess liquid before using it.) Put the lid on the jar and let the horseradish steep for at least 5 days in the refrigerator. The horseradish vinegar can be kept in the refrigerator for up to 2 months.

To make the boiled beef, add the brisket, onion, carrots, leek, garlic, peppercorns, salt, and parsley to a large pot. Cover the beef and vegetables with water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a gentle simmer and continue cooking for about 4 hours, occasionally adding more water if necessary. When the meat is tender to the point of shredding, add the potatoes and cook for another 15 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Transfer the meat, carrots, and potatoes to a serving dish and discard the remaining vegetables. Reserve the stock for other uses. Serve with the horseradish vinegar and chives.

After removing the beef, carrots, and potatoes, you can strain and use the remaining stock for cooking pasta or other dishes. The stock can be stored in the freezer for up to 4 months.