

# LAMB

## ROLLED SHOULDER OF LAMB WITH PEPPER AND PINE NUT STUFFING

Very tasty indeed.

Serves 6

1 x 2kg boned lamb shoulder  
a little olive oil  
1 long sprig of rosemary  
flaked sea salt and ground black pepper

### STUFFING

2 large red peppers

2 large yellow peppers  
100g pine nuts  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
100g day-old baguette  
5 bushy sprigs of marjoram  
4 fat garlic cloves  
1 large unwaxed or well-scrubbed lemon  
flaked sea salt and ground black pepper

To make the stuffing, put the peppers on a baking tray and place under a preheated hot grill close to the heat. Turn every now and again with tongs until the pepper skins are completely blackened and blistered. Transfer to a bowl. Cover with clingfilm and leave to cool for 15 minutes. When the peppers are ready to handle, strip off the skins with your fingers and discard. Open the peppers carefully and flick away the seeds. Do not do any of the above under running water, as you will wash away the delicious charred taste. Tear the flesh into long strips and put them in a large bowl.

Put the pine nuts in a dry frying pan. Toast over a medium heat until golden brown, turning occasionally. Watch like a hawk, as they are quick to burn. Tip them into the bowl with the peppers. Heat the oil in the same pan. Slice the bread, crusts and all, and cut it into small pieces roughly the dimensions of travel dice (½cm-ish). Scatter the bread into the frying pan and cook over a low heat until golden, stirring often. Add to the bowl with the peppers. Strip the marjoram leaves from the sprigs and finely chop. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Add these to the bowl as well. Grate the lemon rind over and season with plenty of salt and a few twists of black pepper. Mix well.

Place the lamb on a large board, skin-side down. Trim off any hard lumps of fat or sinew. It's now your job to make it into a neatish rectangle shape. Take a sturdy rolling pin and bash the thickest parts of the meat to flatten them, until the meat is 3–4cm thick. Trim off any untidy pieces and use them to patch holes or crevices; fill areas where the meat is more sparse. You are trying to create an even blanket of lamb on which to place the filling.

Twist the board so that one of the short sides of the lamb rectangle is closest to you. Squeeze the juice from the lemon over the lamb, flicking out

any pips. Spoon the stuffing across the centre. Lift up the top and bottom of the lamb and wrap over the stuffing from both directions to make a fat parcel, with the pepper mixture just showing at both sides. Cut 7 lengths of kitchen string – each long enough to wrap around the lamb – and ease underneath the parcel, leaving 4cm between each one. Tie the strings very tightly, starting at each end, then the middle, then in between – this will help to keep the shape even. Trim off excess string. Push the stuffing in if it starts to escape. Finish by tying 1 long piece of string around the length of the lamb. Again trim off any excess string. Wrap the parcel tightly in a double layer of clingfilm and place in a small roasting tray or ovenproof dish. Cover and chill for 6 hours or overnight. Stand at room temperature for 30 minutes before roasting. (Ideally, this should be prepared the day before eating and left overnight to find its form.)

Preheat the oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas 5. Remove the clingfilm and weigh the lamb before returning it to the tin or dish. Rub it all over with olive oil. Chop the rosemary leaves very finely with a level tablespoon of flaked sea salt and a good grinding of pepper. Season the lamb well with most of this. Roast in the centre of the oven for 18–20 minutes per 500g stuffed weight. This will result in lamb that's a rich golden brown on the outside and nicely pink on the inside. Remove from the oven. Leave to rest for 10 minutes. Scatter with the remaining rosemary salt. Carve quite thickly and serve with fried potatoes, spinach and a good light red wine.







# ASPARAGUS

## ASPARAGUS WITH HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

Melted butter, great! Vinaigrette, fine! But hollandaise – oh God, what a combination! There is no better luxury to bring to the mouth on the end of a quivering green spear. Don't get me wrong, I do adore asparagus. I'm bad-mannered and greedy for it, but sometimes it's just a vehicle for hollandaise.

Serves 4

500g asparagus spears

### HOLLANDAISE SAUCE

75ml white wine vinegar

juice of ½ lemon

225g unsalted butter, diced

3 large free-range egg yolks

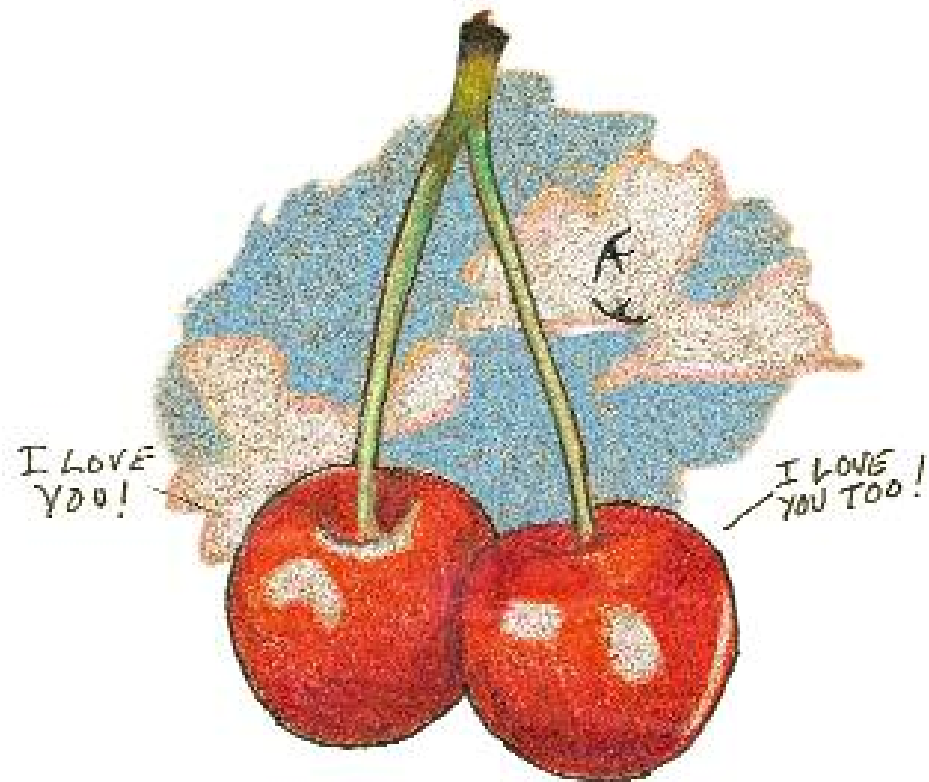
flaked sea salt and ground black pepper

You can be sure you take only the tender part of the asparagus to the pot by bending it from end to end until it snaps and keeping the spear, but I think this wasteful. I like to chew on the fibrous, gnarly part at the table and get what I can. However, if you do want only the tender part, save the bases, as they make great soup.

Wash the asparagus, then make the hollandaise. Put the vinegar and lemon juice in a saucepan and bring to the boil. Leave to bubble furiously until it is reduced to around 2 tablespoons of liquid, then transfer to a largeish bowl. Leave to cool for a few minutes. Put the butter in another saucepan and heat gently until melted. As it bubbles, skim away the little white islands of milk solids that rise to the top. Don't cook it over too high a heat or it will burn. Carefully pour the hot clarified butter through a fine sieve into a warmed jug and discard any white, milky sediment left behind.

Half-fill a saucepan with water and bring to a simmer. Beat the egg yolks into the vinegar reduction and place the bowl so that it perches on top of the pan without touching the water. Beat with an electric whisk, or furiously with a hand one, until thick and very pale. Gradually add the melted butter to the egg yolks in a dribbly stream, whisking constantly until the sauce is thick and glossy. Remove the pan from the heat to prevent the sauce from overheating, and season with salt and a couple of twists of black pepper. Cover the surface with a sheet of clingfilm to stop a skin forming and put to one side in a warmish place while the asparagus is cooked.

Add the asparagus to the water and cook until just tender (this takes 3–5 minutes, depending on the thickness of the spears). Drain well and pile on to a warmed serving plate. Spoon the hollandaise sauce into a small dish and serve with the hot asparagus.



Val Warner

# FRUIT

# CHERRIES

## CHERRY PIE

On the whole I think cherries should not be cooked, but rather eaten in a hammock and from a bowl, the fruit covered in clinging droplets of the water they were rinsed under. Having said that, there are exceptions. Cherry drops, cherry jam but, best of all, cherry pie. Remember to load the shotgun in case some thieving hands appear from below the window lintel.

Serves 6

### FILLING

750g fresh cherries (ideally the red ones)  
150g good-quality black cherry jam  
100ml water, plus 2 tablespoons for  
the arrowroot  
1 tablespoon ground arrowroot

### PASTRY

250g plain flour, plus extra for dusting  
175g fridge-cold unsalted butter,  
cut into cubes  
1 tablespoon caster sugar, plus  
2 teaspoons for dredging  
1 large free-range egg  
1 tablespoon cold water

To make the filling, remove the cherry stalks and flick out the stones (use a cherry stoner if you have one, but if not cut the cherries almost in half to ease out the stones). Put the fruit to one side.

Spoon the cherry jam into a small saucepan and add the 100ml water. Heat gently, stirring constantly, until the jam melts and begins to bubble. Mix the arrowroot with 2 tablespoons cold water to form a smooth paste and stir into the pan. Return to the heat and simmer gently, stirring constantly, until the sauce is very thick and smooth. Tip all the cherries into the pan and turn them to coat in the sauce. It will look very sticky, but this is correct; as the cherries cook, they will release more of their juice into the sauce. Transfer to a roughly 1-litre pie dish, piling up well above the rim. Leave to cool.

To make the pastry, put the flour, butter and sugar in a food processor and blend until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. In a bowl, lightly whisk the egg with the 1 tablespoon cold water. Put 1 tablespoon of the egg mixture (to glaze the pie) in a separate small dish. Add the rest slowly to the flour mixture while the motor is running. Stop blending as soon as it begins to form a ball.

Squidge the pastry into a lump and place it on a lightly floured surface. Roll out with a floured rolling pin to around 7cm larger than the rim of the pie dish. Cut 2 or 3 long, 2.5cm-wide strips from the edges. Brush the rim of the pie dish with a little of the reserved beaten egg and place the strips around the circumference, overlapping slightly at the joins. This will help to make a thicker edge for crimping. Brush the pastry rim with more egg and

gently lift the remaining rolled pastry over to cover the filling and rim. Press firmly to seal the 2 layers of pastry together, then neatly trim off the excess and crimp the edges with your fingertips. (You can use any pastry trimmings to make decorations for the pie or use for jam tarts.) Place the pie on a sturdy baking tray and chill for 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas 6.

Brush the pastry with the remaining egg glaze and sprinkle with the 2 teaspoons sugar. Make a small hole in the centre of the pie with the point of a knife and bake for 25–30 minutes. Reduce the heat to 180°C/350°F/Gas 4 and continue cooking for a further 15–20 minutes until the pastry is golden brown and glistening. Serve hot with proper custard or cream.

