

# Lamb entree has Italian flair

Oh, those enticing flavors and scents of Italy — savory meats, wonderful breads, steaming pastas and hearty herbs enhancing lush red and white sauces.

What better time to experience this palette of Italian tastes than the cool, crisp days of fall, and what better meat to fit into these menus than American lamb. Eaten in the Mediterranean area for thousands of years, lamb is as much a part of the Italian tradition as olive oil and garlic — two ingredients that combine ideally with this wonderfully rich flavored meat.

Lean and tender, with only 176 calories in a three-ounce serving, lamb lends variety and versatility to Italian cuisine. Whether you're looking for fast preparation with cuts such as chops, kebabs, patties or center-cut leg steaks or a longer cooking entree with sirloin, shoulder and leg roasts, racks or stewing meat, lamb adapts to nearly any type of seasoning or marinade.

When dealing with lamb, the best rules to remember are not to overpower the meat's delicate flavor with heavy sauces or glasses and not to overcook it. Lamb is actually its most flavorful and tender when served still slightly pink. If roasting, insert a meat thermometer and heat

to an internal temperature of 140 degrees Fahrenheit for rare, 150 degrees Fahrenheit for medium and 160 degrees Fahrenheit for medium-well. Never cook lamb higher than medium-well.

For a very special but easy to make Italian meal, you will want to try this recipe for "Loin Lamb Chops Roma," using fresh American loin lamb chops, one of the leanest cuts available, sautéed with olive oil and combined with a light and lively sauce of green pepper, eggplant, mushrooms, garlic, onion, wine, tomato and basil.

This dish is ready in less than 30 minutes, guaranteed colorful both in taste and appearance.

**Delizioso!**  
**LOIN LAMB CHOPS ROMA**  
(2 servings)

4 lean fresh American lamb loin chops, well trimmed and cut 1-inch thick (4 ounces each)

Salt, to taste  
Pepper, to taste  
1/4 cup olive oil, divided  
1 cup sliced green pepper  
1 cup diced eggplant  
1 cup sliced mushrooms  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1/4 cup minced onion  
1/4 cup dry white wine



Ready in less than 30 minutes, Loin Lamb Chops Roma is colorful both in taste and appearance.

1 medium tomato, seeded and diced  
1/4 cup shredded fresh basil  
Season lamb loin chops with salt and pepper; set aside.  
In large skillet, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil and sauté lamb chops 3-4 minutes per side or until browned. Remove from pan; set aside.  
To skillet add remaining 2 table-

spoons olive oil and sauté green pepper, eggplant, mushrooms, garlic and onion for 4-5 minutes; stirring occasionally.  
Stir in wine and add lamb chops; cover and simmer for 5-8 minutes or until lamb is cooked to desired degree of doneness.  
Add tomato and basil and serve.

# Make simple desserts fancy

AP — Believe me, there are easy ways to perk up cookies, cupcakes, cakes, or desserts for special events such as birthdays and school or office parties. Some of these ideas may sound extravagant, but they're simple enough that even the kids can help. With a few ingredients from your kitchen cupboard, you can put them together in a matter of minutes.

**Toasted Nuts or Coconut:** jazz up all types of desserts. Sprinkle toasted nuts or coconut evenly over the top or in a pattern. Or, dress up frosted cakes or tarts by lightly patting nuts or coconut onto the sides.

To toast nuts or coconut, spread them in a thin layer in a shallow baking pan and bake in a 350-degree F oven for 5 to 10 minutes or until golden brown, stirring once or twice. Watch carefully so they don't overbrown. And, while you're at it, toast some extra to freeze for another time.

**Gumdrops:** Decorations: add a spark of color to cakes, fruitcakes and breads. You can use them whole, flattened and cut into shapes such as stars, or rolled to form three-dimensional shapes such as roses.  
To make gumdrop cutouts, sprinkle sugar on a flat surface. Place the slightly flattened gumdrops, one at a time, on the surface. Using a rolling pin, roll out each gumdrop, then use a knife or hors d'oeuvre or small cookie cutters to cut the shapes.  
To make roses, roll the gumdrops

into ovals, then cut the ovals in half crosswise. Starting at one corner, roll up a half-oval diagonally to form the rose center. Press on additional half-ovals, curving the outer edges to resemble petals. Trim the base if necessary.

**Purchased Candies:** from chocolate-flavored sprinkles to rainbow-colored edible glitter, give cookies a festive look. Sprinkle candies onto the dough so they'll bake right on. Or, frost a batch of cookies or cupcakes and arrange the candies on top.

You can purchase decorative candies, colored sugars and colored marzipan at most supermarkets. For edible glitter and a unique selection of decorative candies, check mail-order catalogs or stores that carry cake decorating supplies.

**Powdered Sugar:** sprinkled over the tops of cakes or cookies, creates a simple or an elegant-looking garnish, depending on the technique you use.

To sift powdered sugar, spoon the powdered sugar into a sifter and sift it directly onto the cake or cookies.

For a more formal pattern, place a paper doily or a small craft stencil on top of the cake. Lightly sift the powdered sugar over top, then carefully remove the doily or stencil.

For chocolate-flavored powdered sugar, in a small bowl combine 2 tablespoons powdered sugar and 1 to 1 1/4 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder. Spoon into a sifter and sift as you would white powdered sugar.

# Dieters can dip into this sweet, creamy treat

AP — You would expect a dip this creamy and sweet-tasting to blow your diet, but guess again. With pureed banana and cottage cheese, this one has a mere 14 calories per tablespoon. Better still, it's delicious and easy to make.

**GINGERED FRUIT DIP**  
1 cup low-fat cottage cheese  
1 small banana, cut up  
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger  
Milk

Orange peel cut into thin 2-inch strips.  
Fresh fruit dippers (such as apple wedges, kiwi/fruit slices, or mandarin orange sections)

In a blender container or food processor bowl combine cottage cheese, banana and ground ginger. Cover and blend or process until smooth.

Add milk, a teaspoon at a time, until dip is of desired consistency.

(You'll need about 1 tablespoon milk.) Blend until smooth. Cover and chill up to 4 hours. Stir before serving. Garnish with orange peel. Serve with fresh fruit dippers. Makes 1 1/4 cups dip.

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