

Lamb sandwich ready in a hurry

Springtime freshness provides a beautiful flood of floral color, including fruits and vegetables. One of this season's most popular meats is fresh American lamb.

The concept of seasonal spring lamb is no longer applicable, but the tradition is enjoyed year round with fresh American lamb.

Many people are choosing to add this tender, lean and healthy meat to their menus and are always looking for a variety of new ways to prepare lamb. With only 176 calories per three-ounce cooked serving and ample iron, protein, niacin, and B-vitamins, lamb is an excellent nutrition source.

WHETHER YOU like to grill, broil, roast or microwave there is no better time for trying today's lamb.

Now available in a larger variety of cuts than ever before, choose from inexpensive shoulder cuts, shanks, ground meat, Denver ribs, strips for fajitas and stir fry to the more upscale style of cuts including sirloin, racks and loin chops.

This versatile and easy to make sandwich can be prepared conventionally or in the microwave.

"Mediterranean Pocket Sandwiches" are filled with a flavorful combination of ground lamb, spinach, mushrooms, onion, herbs and feta cheese. Quantities can be made easily to create a serve yourself springtime buffet or picnic. Serve with a colorful fruit salad and lots of iced tea laced with fresh mint.

MEDITERRANEAN POCKET SANDWICH

(makes 6 sandwich halves)

- Topping:**
 1 cup chopped tomato
 1 cup diced cucumber
 2 tablespoons Italian dressing
Lamb Filling:
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 1/2 pound lean fresh ground American lamb
 1/2 pound mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
 1 teaspoon Italian herb blend
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
 3 pita pocket breads, cut in half
 1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
 1/2 teaspoon lemon pepper
 1 cup (4 ounces) feta cheese, crumbled

To make topping: In small bowl combine tomato, cucumber, and Italian dressing; set aside.

Conventional preparation of filling: In large skillet with cover, heat oil. Add onion and saute until well browned. Add lamb, stirring to crumble; lamb and saute until no longer pink; drain well. Stir in spinach, mushrooms, Italian herb blend, garlic powder, and red pepper flakes; mixing to blend well. Cover and cook 8 to 10 minutes; stirring occasionally. Add feta cheese mixing well, allow to melt slightly. Warm pita bread to soften. Stuff pita with hot lamb filling and garnish with tomato topping. Serve.

Microwave preparation of filling: In 2-quart microwave-safe dish combine onions and lamb (eliminate oil). Microwave on high power for 4 minutes, stirring several times to crumble lamb. Drain off excess liquid. Add spinach, mushrooms, herb blend, garlic powder, lemon pepper and red pepper flakes to lamb mixture. Stir to blend. Cover with plastic wrap, venting edge and microwave



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on high power for 3-4 minutes stirring twice, until heated through. Uncover and stir in feta cheese; cover and set aside. Place pita breads on paper towel and microwave on high power for 30 seconds to soften. Stuff with hot lamb filling and garnish with tomato topping. Serve.

Nutritional Analysis: Calories, 312; sodium, 412 mg; protein, 16 g; iron, 2.4 mg; carbohydrates, 19 g; cholesterol, 46 mg; fat, 19 g.

Learn new ways to cook tomatoes

AP — Go one step beyond tomato and lettuce salad with Calzones, Green Mountain Coleslaw, Greek Stuffed Tomatoes and Coffeecake Twist.

These are among the recipes featured in "Tomatoes! 365 Healthy Recipes for Year-Round Enjoyment," created by the editors of Garden Way Publishing (\$12.95 soft-cover).

There's a recipe for every day of the year, and a tomato for every taste, from beefsteak, plum and sun-dried tomatoes to tomatillo and cherry tomatoes. Even the green tomato, a favorite of connoisseurs, has an entire chapter with dozens of recipes including Fried Green Tomatoes, Sesame Green Tomato Quiche and Sally's Green Tomato Fruit Cake.

The cookbook contains growing tips, step-by-step instructions for freezing, drying and storing tomatoes, plus recipes for more than 70 tomato stuffings.

Also available:

If you've never tried cooking with dried tomatoes, the "Sonoma Dried Tomato Cookbook" (Timber Crest Farms, Healdsburg, Ca.; \$10.95 soft-cover) contains 125 recipes including Marinated Dried Tomato Cheese-cake and Lamb Stew with Dried Tomatoes and Couscous.

Dried tomatoes are sweet and flavorful, with a chewy texture and intense flavor. They can be used in appetizers, soups and salads, main dishes, breads and pizza.

The following recipe for Greek Stuffed Tomatoes, from "Tomatoes! 365 Healthy Recipes for Year-Round Enjoyment," takes about 30 minutes to prepare. The stuffing includes

cooked chopped spinach and feta cheese.

GREEK STUFFED TOMATOES

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1 small onion, diced
 2 cups cooked, cooked spinach
 2 teaspoons dried basil
 1/2 cup bread crumbs
 1 egg
 1/2 pound feta cheese, crumbled
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
 6 firm, medium-red tomatoes, with insides scooped out

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. In a small saucepan, heat the oil and saute the onion for 10 minutes or until translucent. Combine all the remaining ingredients, except the tomatoes, and add to the onion. Stuff the filling into the tomatoes. Bake in a 350-degree F oven for 15 minutes. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Recipe from "Tomatoes! 365 Healthy Recipes for Year-Round Enjoyment," by the editors of Garden Way Publishing, Storey Communications, Pownal, Vt. \$22.95 hard-cover, \$12.95 soft-cover.

For a copy of "Tomatoes! 365 Healthy Recipes for Year-Round Enjoyment," send a check or money order for \$15.70 for soft-cover or \$20.70 for hard-cover, which includes \$2.75 for shipping and handling; to: Storey Communications, Box 445, Pownal, Vt. 05261.

For a copy of the "Sonoma Dried Tomato Cookbook," send a check for \$10.95 to: Sonoma Dried Tomato Cookbook, 4791 Dry Creek Road, Healdsburg, Calif. 94948.

Tips for cooking chicken in your microwave oven

AP — Cooking one cut-up chicken in your microwave oven can really save time. However, it can also be a tight squeeze, especially when your oven cavity is too small for a 12-by-7-1/2-by-2-inch baking dish.

If all the pieces of a cut-up broiler-fryer chicken won't fit in a single layer in the largest dish that fits into your oven, then leave out the neck, wings or back. They have less edible meat on them anyway. Refrigerate or freeze the extra pieces to flavor soup or stock.

WITH FEWER pieces in your microwave oven, you may need to adjust the cooking time. For an oven with 600 watts or more of cooking power, check the chicken a little earlier than the recipe indicates. For an oven with fewer than 600 watts of cooking power, you may need the same amount of time as in the recipe or even longer, despite having fewer pieces. To check for doneness, cut into the chicken near the bone to make sure the meat is no longer pink.

HERBED CHICKEN AND PEAS

- 4 slices bacon
 One 2 1/2- to 3-pound broiler-fryer chicken, cut up
 1 medium onion, chopped (1 1/4 cup)
 1 clove garlic, minced
 2 tablespoons dry white wine
 1/2 teaspoon dried basil, crushed
 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 One 10-ounce package frozen peas
 2 medium tomatoes, cut into wedges

2 tablespoons solpped parsley
 Hot cooked rice or brown rice (optional)

In a 12-by-7-1/2-by-2-inch microwave-safe baking dish, arrange bacon. Cover with microwave-safe paper towels. Cook on 100 percent power (high) for 4 to 6 minutes or until crisp. Remove and drain on paper towels. Crumble bacon and set aside.

Rinse chicken and pat dry. In the same baking dish arrange chicken

pieces, skin side down, with the meaty portions toward the edges of the dish. Cover with waxed paper. Cook on high for 5 minutes.

Combine onion, garlic, wine, basil, thyme and salt. Drain juices from chicken. Give the dish a half-turn, turn pieces skin side up, and rearrange, putting cooked portions toward the center. Pour onion mixture over top. Cover with waxed paper. Cook on high for 5 minutes. Give the dish a half-turn. Add peas. Cook, covered, on high for 5

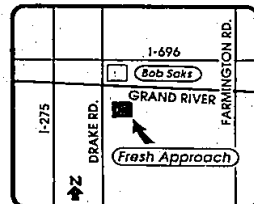
minutes. Add tomato wedges, parsley and bacon pieces. Cook, covered, for 3 to 5 minutes more or until chicken and peas are done. Serve with rice, if desired. Makes 6 servings.

Nutrition information per serving: 217 cal, 30 g pro, 9 g carbo, 6 g fat, 271 mg sodium. U.S. RDA: 14 percent vit. A, 16 percent vit. C, 16 percent thiamine, 10 percent riboflavin, 64 percent niacin, 12 percent iron.

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