

Salsa-Braised Lamb Shanks

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Lamb isn't usually a hot contender when it comes to taco fillings, but the tender, spicy shredded meat that comes off these shanks all but bleats "burrito!" Serve the braised meat on the bone as is on a bed of rice, with the sauce on top, or make shredded lamb enchiladas (the sauce is made!), tacos, or dressed-up rice and beans. You could also take the meat off the bones and shred it, and return it to the sauce with black beans, corn, tomatoes, and cooked rice, for a spicy lamb soup that would be great with sour cream and avocado.

Use a salsa that matches your taste for spice; I used the red "salsa autentica" from Trader Joe's.

Note: If you'd like to serve the meat on the bone, ask your butcher to cut the shanks in half for you (so you have four pieces).

TIME: 20 minutes active time, plus cooking

MAKES: 4 servings

1/2 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
2 lamb shanks (about 1 1/2 pounds each)
2 tablespoons vegetable or peanut oil
1 medium onion, chopped
2 (12-ounce) jars salsa

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Place the flour, salt, and pepper in a zip-top plastic bag and shake to combine. Add the lamb, seal the bag, and shake to coat all the pieces evenly.

Heat a large ovenproof pot with a lid, such as a Dutch oven, over medium-high heat. When hot, add the oil, then add the floured lamb pieces. (Discard the remaining flour.) Sear the lamb pieces on all sides, about 15 minutes total, until all the surfaces are a deep golden brown. (You may have to regulate the heat to prevent the flour from burning.)

Transfer the browned lamb to a plate, add the onion, and cook the onion for a few minutes, stirring often, until soft. Place the lamb pieces on top of the onions, pour the salsa over the lamb, and cook the lamb for 1 1/2 hours, turning the lamb pieces once every 30 minutes.

Let the lamb cool in its liquid for about 20 minutes before serving, in whole pieces or shredded.