



Photography: Kenneth Thyssen

LAMB SHANKS BRAISED IN RED WINE

WITH SOFT LAVENDER POLENTA AND BACON-WRAPPED GREEN BEANS

by Chef **Gerard Coste** of *Passions on the Beach*,
Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort

This slow-cooked lamb dish by Chef Gerard Coste of the *Amsterdam Manor* is an homage to Aruba's innate ability to make you relax.

The two-and-a-half hours it spends braising in the oven gives you plenty of time to enjoy the view, the water, or a pre-dinner glass of that Cabernet Sauvignon that will pair perfectly with the tender meat.

"You can't make it wrong," says French Chef Gerard Coste, which is music to a home cook's ears. In 2017, Coste took over the kitchen at the boutique property, where flagship

restaurant *Passions on the Beach* occupies one of the most gorgeous strips of coastline in the low-rise hotel area. Guests can wiggle their toes in the sand while they enjoy Coste's refreshing lobster tail tabbouleh salad with watermelon-mango relish; his fish of the day with scallops and shrimp; or this luscious braised lamb.

After working in top kitchens in France, England and Monaco, followed by 30 years on Aruba and eight grandchildren, the passionate chef (pardon the pun) understands the need for relaxation and *joie de vivre*, which includes simple, elegant and delicious meals. "Braising is an old cooking method popular in France," he says, and guests at *Passions*, where this lamb is now on the menu year-round, can understand why. Seared and then cooked slowly in red wine with garlic and fresh rosemary and thyme, the lamb stays juicy and flavorful and all you have to do is leave it alone. While you could accompany it with basic mashed potatoes and steamed broccoli, the lavender polenta and bacon-wrapped green beans add a little *je ne sais quoi* – which pairs perfectly with that view.

GERARD COSTE

Chef – *Passions on the Beach*, *Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort*



Lamb Shanks Braised in Red Wine with Soft Lavender Polenta and Bacon-wrapped Green Beans Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

- 6 lamb shanks
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tbsp. (45 ml) olive oil
- 2 whole heads garlic, unpeeled, halved crosswise
- 1 rib celery, cut into large dice
- 2 carrots, cut into large dice
- 1 large onion, peeled and cut into about 8 wedges
- 2 tsp. (30 ml) tomato paste
- 3 cups (750 ml) dry red wine (about 1 bottle)
- 8 cups (2 l) beef stock
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 spring fresh rosemary
- 1 spring fresh thyme

Instructions

1. Heat the oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. Season the shanks with salt and pepper.
3. In a large, high-sided ovenproof pot, heat the oil over medium-high and sear the shanks in batches on all sides until golden brown.
4. Remove the meat from the pot and add the garlic, celery, carrots and onion. Cook until they're light brown in color.
5. Add the tomato paste, red wine, beef stock, bay leaves, rosemary and thyme and return the lamb to the pot.
6. Cover the pot and place it in the oven, turning the shanks every ½ hour, until the meat is very tender but still on the bone, about 2 hours.
7. Remove the shanks from the pot and strain the braising liquid into a medium saucepan.
8. Remove the fat from the top of the liquid and simmer gently until the flavor has intensified and the volume is reduced by about a third.
9. Serve the shanks on top of the polenta and ladle the sauce over the lamb. Serve with the green beans.

Soft Lavender Polenta

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups (750 ml) chicken stock
- 1 spoonful of butter
- Zest of ¼ of an orange
- 1 pinch dry edible lavender (if not available replace with "herbes de Provence")
- ¾ cup (375 ml) polenta
- 1 cup (250 ml) heavy cream
- Salt and ground black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a pot, combine the chicken stock, butter, orange zest and dry lavender and bring to a boil.
2. Whisk in the polenta, reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for 2 minutes.
3. Add the heavy cream and salt and pepper to taste.
4. Serve immediately. If you wait too long, the polenta will become hard; in this case, add water a little at a time until you reach a soft consistency.

Green beans

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ lb. fresh green beans
- 1 spoonful of butter
- ½ tsp. chopped garlic
- A pinch of freshly ground pepper
- 6 slices of bacon

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Blanch the beans in salted water (see tip).
2. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).
3. Melt the butter over medium heat. When hot, add the garlic and cook for 1 minute.
4. Add the green beans and ground pepper.
5. Divide the beans into six handfuls and wrap each in a slice of bacon.
6. In a dry, non-stick pan, sear the bacon-wrapped parcels on both sides over medium-high heat, then transfer to the preheated oven and bake until the bacon is crispy, about 3 minutes.

TIPS

1. If you don't have a large enough ovenproof pot with a lid, you can reduce the recipe to four lamb shanks or use a large casserole dish covered in aluminum foil. Or sear the meat and then transfer it to a slow-cooker for six to eight hours on low or four to six hours on high.
2. Blanching the green beans means adding them to boiling water very briefly, bringing the water back to a boil, then removing them immediately and cooling them in ice water quickly. "This will keep them green and crispy."
3. You can thicken the sauce by adding cornstarch to a tablespoon of the liquid and then whisking the mixture back into the sauce until it thickens like gravy.
4. The carrots, onions, celery and garlic heads – a classic "mirepoix" for sauces and stocks – are discarded after cooking, once their flavor has infused the cooking juices.
5. The lamb tastes even better reheated the next day, so don't feel as though you need to invite over friends for dinner if you're worried that six lamb shanks will be too many...