



CULTURE AND NATURE: THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE OF
SHEEP FARMING AND PASTORAL LIFE

RESEARCH THEME: FOOD

RESEARCH REPORT FOR THE UK

By Simon Bell and Gemma Bell

Estonian University of Life Sciences

November 2011



The CANEPAL project is co-funded by the European Commission, Directorate General Education and Culture, CULTURE 2007-2013. Project no: 508090-CU-1-2010-1-HU-CULTURE-VOL11

This report reflects the authors' view and the Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained herein

1. INTRODUCTION

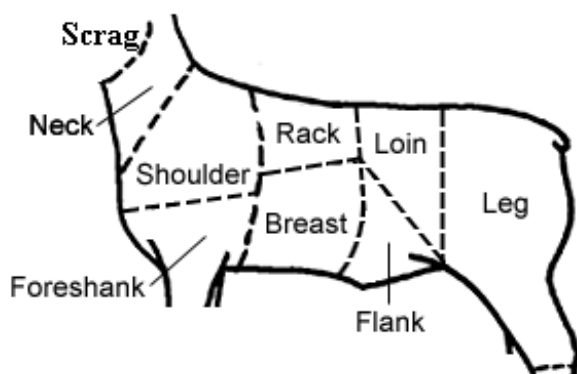
Sheep have been a major farm animal in the UK for hundreds of years and also been raised in countries such as New Zealand which were British colonies and which send considerable quantities of lamb and mutton to British markets. Food from sheep has been and remains common in British cuisine and there are a number of typical and classic dishes as well as plainer and more popular ones. These are not specifically associated with sheep farming or shepherding but are intrinsically part of British and Irish cooking generally. The term lamb is used for young fattened lambs up to one year old. The meat from a mature sheep is known as mutton.

In general meat from sheep (lamb and mutton) is the main product and sheep milk is hardly used except in a very small way using non-native breeds. Owing to food hygiene regulations slaughter of sheep must be carried out in licensed abattoirs so that the food product chain starts with hill farmers selling store lambs to lowland farmers for finishing, via the auction marts, after which these farmers sell the fat lambs or fattened cull sheep to abattoirs where the animals are slaughtered and the carcasses sold on to butchers or, increasingly, to supermarkets which nowadays have their own quality assurance schemes. Animals are also sold live or dead to the export market. Some producers will deal directly with slaughterhouses and butchers in order to be able to market premium products or even with supermarkets directly.

The flavour of lamb is held to be dependent on its diet and that of sheep raised in the hills and mountains of the UK affected by the vegetation, such as grasses, salt marsh or heather.

1.1 Butchering of lamb and mutton

Sheep are butchered into a range of specific cuts of meat which can be used for different dishes and which cook in different ways and have to be treated differently, such as slow casseroles for cuts which can be tough if not cooked properly. The price of cuts depends on their culinary potential.



The basic parts of a lamb carcass

These basic parts have different culinary possibilities:

Breast

This cut is one of the cheapest cuts and whilst the price is similar to scrag end, but is much more versatile. It can be roasted on the bone, boned, stuffed and rolled, or when well trimmed, can be used for mince, burgers or skewers (kebabs). Some butchers also sell this cut in strips which are ideal for barbecues.

Flank

Unlike other cuts from the loin area, the flank is much tougher and is usually sold as mince.

Foreshank

Also known as Lamb shanks, this cut is suitable for slow roasting, stewing and braising. It has become very popular in recent years especially when braised when a whole shank with the bone is served per person. It is a very flavourful cut of meat.

Leg

This is a prime cut with little fat which is excellent for roasting as a joint. It is often cut into lamb steaks suitable for frying or grilling or into cubes for lean kebabs.

Loin

The loin is the most tender part of the lamb. It is from this area that loin chops come from as well as medallions, noisettes as well as roasting cuts. Suitable for roasting although the joints tend to be small unless a whole saddle is used, made up of a double loin roast, from both sides of the backbone. Frying and grilling are excellent for the smaller cuts.

Neck

This is one of the tougher cuts and is generally sold as Stewing lamb or made into mince meat. When sold in pieces it is only suitable for very long, slow, moist cooking. Although tough the flavour is very good so well worth the extra cooking. Best End of neck is traditionally used for Lancashire Hotpot.

Rack

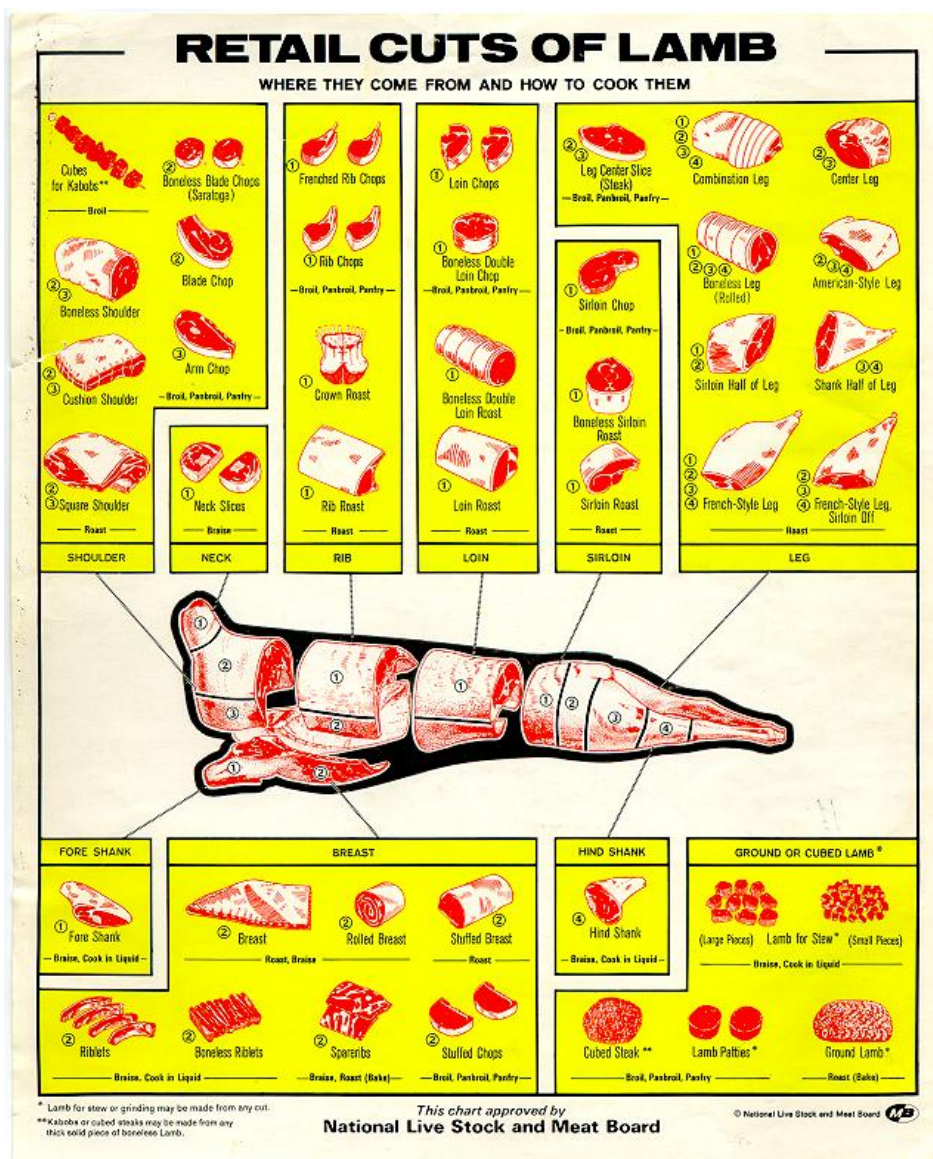
A "rack of lamb" is the name given to the whole rib section on either side of the backbone between the shoulder and the loin. A tender and flavoursome cut, it is also expensive and it is suitable for dry heat cooking such as roasting or grilling. This cut has a layer of fat which, although it can be trimmed down, is best left on when roasting as it melts and bastes the meat during cooking. Racks are often "Frenched" which means that the upper ends of the rib bones are scraped clean of meat and fat thereby exposing the bones which sometimes have paper frills popped over the top. Once frenched, it can be used to create a "Crown" where two racks are tied together to form a circle, the middle of which is then stuffed or a "Guard of honour" where the two sides of the rack are stood vertically with the bare bones uppermost and rib ends interlocked to resemble soldiers' swords. Racks are not large pieces: one rack of lamb is usually large enough to serve three people.

Scrag

Also known as scrag end or neck end, this is one of the tougher cuts and is therefore one of the cheaper ones. The meat from this area is often more fatty than other cuts and is usually sold chopped or diced for use in stews and casseroles.

Shoulder

Shoulder is often sold as two separate joints, blade and arm (knuckle). The whole shoulder is also sometimes called "square cut" which consists of the arm, blade, and rib bones. Suitable for roasting, shoulder is a relatively expensive cut, even more so if you buy it boned and rolled although adding a stuffing before rolling makes it more economical. Many cooks prefer to buy it this way as the structure of the bones in the joint can make carving difficult. Shoulder meat is also often trimmed of fat and sold as cubes for curries, kebabs and casseroles. **Shoulder chops** are suitable for pan-frying, grilling or braising.



An example of a chart describing the different cuts of meat (from the USA but essentially the same as the UK)

These cuts of meat exclude the offal (heart, lungs, liver, kidneys etc), which tend to be used in special ways. While liver may be braised and kidneys sometimes served “devilled” the other offal is mainly to be found in special dishes like haggis (see below). In recent years, with the rise in the popularity of Indian cookery, lamb and mutton have become associated with curries and other spicy dishes as well as the traditional British ones or those influenced by, for example, French cuisine.

1.2 Cooking technology

Owing to the fact that sheep meat is part of mainstream British cookery the equipment and technology used to cook it is similar to that of other dishes – roasting pans, casseroles, saucepans, grills, frying pans either on the hob or in the oven. There is nothing particularly special or unique about any of these techniques.

2. RECIPES FROM LAMB AND MUTTON

This section presents a selection of traditional and regional dishes made from lamb or mutton

2.1 Roast leg of lamb

Leg of lamb is one of the classic British roast meats along with roast beef and game dishes. It forms part of the canon of hearty British Sunday lunch/dinner menus and when roasted well and not too dry offers a succulent and flavourful meat to go with vegetables, Yorkshire puddings and other accompaniments. It has been traditional to eat roast lamb at Easter, although this is not a universal practice any more.

Recipe

Ingredients

A leg of lamb on the bone or partly deboned as a “carvery leg”. This may be around 2kg so for a smaller family or couple a half-leg will also be good.

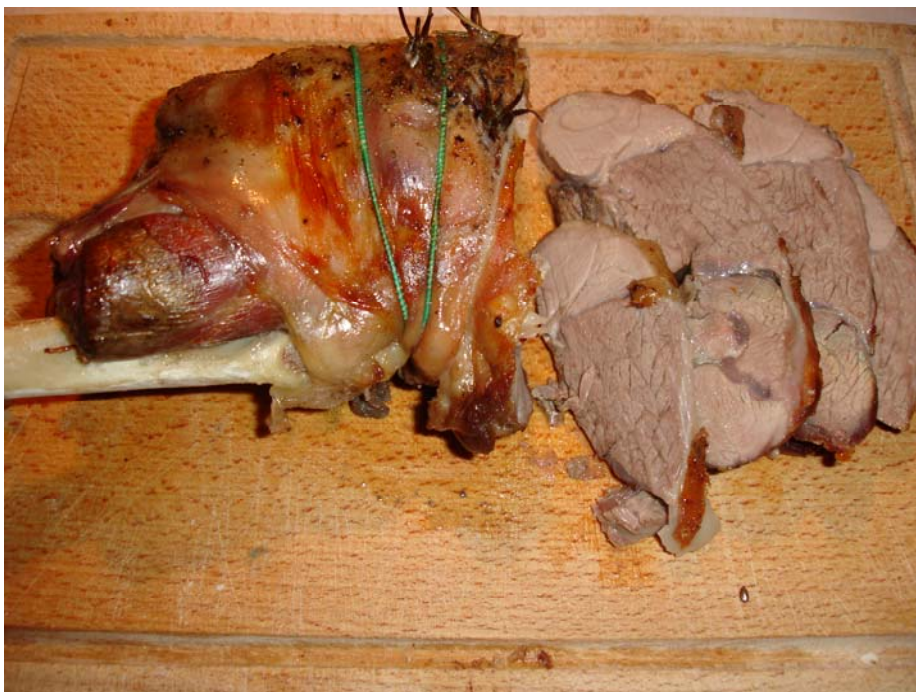
Preparation method

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6. Remove the lamb from the fridge and allow it to get to room temperature.
2. Place the lamb in a roasting tin, cover loosely with foil or a lid if the tin has one and place in the preheated oven.
3. After 50-60 minutes, uncover and leave to roast for a further 30 minutes (for medium) or until cooked to your liking.
4. At the end of cooking time, remove the lamb from the oven and leave it to rest in the roasting tin for 10-15 minutes, with some foil on top to keep it warm.
5. Make the gravy. Heat a heavy-based frying pan on the hob. When hot, pour the pan juices from the roasting tin into the pan (be careful as it may splatter). Add some flour and seasoning to thicken. Turn the heat down and leave the sauce to reduce.

6. To serve, carve the lamb across the grain of the meat and put on a hot plate with a selection of vegetables (and possibly Yorkshire puddings) and pour over the gravy. Mint sauce is also a traditional accompaniment while red currant jelly is also very good.



A “carvery leg” of lamb which has been partly deboned before cooking.



The leg of lamb roasted and carved – note the way it is carved across the grain

2.2 Lancashire Hotpot

Lancashire hotpot is a dish made traditionally from lamb or mutton and onion, topped with sliced potatoes, left to bake in the oven all day in a heavy pot and on a low heat. Originating in the days of heavy industrialisation in Lancashire in the North West of England, it requires a minimum of effort to prepare.

Recipe

Ingredients:

675g/1½ lb potatoes
675g/1½ lb best end neck of lamb
1 large onion, sliced
2 large carrots sliced
Mushrooms if desired
Salt and pepper
1 heaped teasp dried mixed herbs
300ml/10 fl.oz. fresh stock

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 190C, 375F, Gas mark 5.
2. Peel and slice the onions, potatoes and carrots
3. Cut the meat into even sized pieces. Place the meat, carrots, mushrooms and onions in the casserole
4. Add the mixed herbs, salt and pepper to the hot stock then pour over the meat and vegetables in the casserole. Top with the sliced potatoes then cover tightly with a lid or foil. Place in the oven and cook for 2 hours.
5. 20 minutes before the end of the cooking time, remove the cover so the potatoes brown. Serve the hot pot very hot.



Lancashire hotpot just out of the oven



Lancashire hotpot on the plate

2.3 Scotch Pie

A Scotch pie is a small, double-crust meat pie filled with minced mutton or other meat. It may also be known as a shell pie or a mince pie (although the latter term is ambiguous) to differentiate it from other varieties of savoury pie, such as the steak pie, steak-and-kidney pie, steak-and-tattie (potato) pie, and so forth. The Scotch pie is believed to originate in Scotland, where it is often known simply as a mince pie or simply a **pie** but can be found in other parts of the United Kingdom. They are often sold alongside other types of hot food in football grounds, traditionally accompanied by a drink of Bovril, resulting in the occasional reference to football pies.

The traditional filling of mutton is often highly spiced with pepper and other ingredients and is placed inside a shell of hot water crust pastry. An individual piemaker's precise recipe, including the types and quantities of spice used, is usually kept a close secret, for fear of imitations. It is baked in a round, straight-sided tin, about 8 cm in diameter and 4 cm high, and the top "crust" (which is soft) is placed about 1 cm lower than the rim to make a space for adding accompaniments such as mashed potatoes, baked beans, brown sauce or gravy.

Scotch pies are often served hot by take-away restaurants and bakeries, and at outdoor events. The hard crust of the pie enables it to be eaten by hand with no wrapping, but increasingly they are cooked and served in a foil tin. Typically there is a round hole of about 7.5mm in the centre of the top crust.

Ingredients

Hot water pastry:

8oz/225g lard
1.5 lbs/680g self-raising flour
1tsp salt
10 fl oz/300ml water

Milk for glaze

Filling:

1lb/453g finely minced lamb or mutton

8oz/225g breadcrumbs

Salt, pepper, nutmeg or mace to season

Instructions:

1. Melt the lard in the boiling water.
2. Sieve the flour into a warmed bowl. Make a well in the middle and mix in the hot fat and water mixture with a wooden spoon.
3. When the dough has cooled a little - knead with your hands. When it is smooth and 'elastic' - leave in a warm place until firmer (but still elastic enough to roll out)
4. Roll out the pastry to around keeping it thin. Cut the pastry into 3- 4 inch round shapes or if you are using pie or muffin molds - to the correct size. Cut out enough circles for the top of the pies.
5. Mix the mince with the breadcrumbs and seasoning.
6. Add gravy to bind, and mix thoroughly
7. Fill the pie shells to 3/4 full. Add the top and seal.
8. Using a knife, make a couple of cuts in the centre of the pid to allow the steam to escape. Brush with milk to glaze.
9. Pre-heat the oven to 190 centigrade/ 375 F. Bake in the oven for 25 minutes or until golden brown.



Scotch pie

2.4 Haggis

Haggis is a dish containing sheep's 'pluck' (heart, liver and lungs), minced with onion, oatmeal, suet, spices, and salt, mixed with stock, and traditionally simmered in the animal's stomach for approximately three hours. Most modern commercial haggis is prepared in a casing rather than an actual stomach. It has a long history and may be considered to be Scotland's national dish. It is one of the few dishes with special traditions attached to it and for that reason it will be described in more detail.

Haggis is a kind of sausage, or savoury pudding cooked in a casing of sheep's intestine, as many sausages are. As the 2001 English edition of the *Larousse Gastronomique* puts it, "Although its description is not immediately appealing, haggis has an excellent nutty texture and delicious savoury flavour".

The haggis is a traditional Scottish dish memorialised as the national dish of Scotland by Robert Burns' poem *Address to a Haggis* in 1787. Haggis is traditionally served with "neeps and tatties" (Scots: swede, yellow turnip or rutabaga and potatoes, boiled and mashed separately) and a "dram" (i.e. a glass of Scotch whisky), especially as the main course of a Burns supper. However it is also often eaten with other accompaniments.

Haggis is popularly assumed to be of Scottish origin, but there is a lack of historical evidence that could conclusively attribute its origins to any one place.

The first known written recipe for a dish of the name (as 'hagese'), made with offal and herbs, is in the verse cookbook *Liber Cure Cocorum* dating from around 1430 in Lancashire, North West England.

For hagese'.

þe hert of schepe, þe nere þou take,

þo bowel nocht þou shalle forsake,

On þe turbilen made, and boyled wele,

Hacke alle togeder with gode persole,

The Scottish poem *Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*, which is dated before 1520 (the generally accepted date prior to the death of William Dunbar, one of the composers), refers to 'haggeis'

Thy fowll front had, and he that Bartilmo flaid;
The gallowis gaipis eftir thy graceles
gruntill, As thow wald for ane haggeis, hungry gled.

— *William Dunbar, Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*

An early printed recipe for haggis appears in 1615 in "The English Huswife" by Gervase Markham. It contains a section entitled "Skill in Oate meale"

The use and vertues of these two severall kinds of Oate-meales in maintaining the Family, they are so many (according to the many customes of many Nations) that it is almost impossible to reckon all;" and then proceeds to give a description of "oat-meale mixed with blood, and the Liver of either Sheepe, Calfe or Swine, maketh that pudding which is called the Haggas or Haggus, of whose goodnesse it is in vaine to boast, because there is hardly to be found a man that doth not affect them

— Gervase Markham, *The English Huswife*

Food writer Alan Davidson goes back further, stating that the Ancient Romans were the first people known to have made products of the haggis type. Even earlier, a kind of primitive haggis is referred to in Homer's *Odyssey*, in book 20, (towards the end of the eighth century BC) when Odysseus is compared to "*a man before a great blazing fire turning swiftly this way and that a stomach full of fat and blood, very eager to have it roasted quickly*". Haggis was "*born of necessity, as a way to utilize the least expensive cuts of meat and the innards as well*" (Andrew Zimmern). Since the internal organs rapidly perish, it is likely that haggis-like preparations have been around since pre-history.

Clarissa Dickson Wright claims that it "came to Scotland in a longship [i.e. from Scandinavia] even before Scotland was a single nation."^[8] Dickson-Wright further cites etymologist Walter William Skeat as further suggestion of possible Scandinavian origins: Skeat claimed that the *hag*— part of the word is derived from the Old Norse *haggw* or the Old Icelandic *hoggva* (*höggva* in modern Icelandic), meaning 'to hew' or strike with a sharp weapon, relating to the chopped-up contents of the dish. One theory claims that the name "haggis" is derived from Norman French. Norman French was more guttural than modern French so that the "ch" of "hachis", i.e. "chopped", was pronounced as the "ch" in "loch", giving "haggis". This conjecture, however, is discredited by the *Oxford English Dictionary*.^[11]

Dickson Wright suggests that haggis was invented as a way of cooking quick-spoiling offal near the site of a hunt, without the need to carry along an additional cooking vessel. The liver and kidneys could be grilled directly over a fire, but this treatment was unsuitable for the stomach, intestines, or lungs. Chopping up the lungs and stuffing the stomach with them and whatever fillers might have been on hand, then boiling the assembly — likely in a vessel made from the animal's hide — was one way to make sure these parts did not go to waste.

Recitation of the poem *Address to a Haggis* by Robert Burns is an important part of the Burns supper.

Haggis is traditionally served with the Burns supper on the week of January 25, when Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, is commemorated. He wrote the poem *Address to a Haggis*, which starts "Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face, Great chieftain o' the puddin-race!" During Burns's lifetime haggis was a popular dish for the poor, as it was very cheap, being made from leftover, otherwise thrown away, parts of a sheep (the most common livestock in Scotland), yet nourishing.

Haggis is widely available in supermarkets in Scotland and other parts of the world all the year round, with cheaper brands normally packed in artificial casings, rather than

stomachs, just as cheaper brands of sausages are no longer stuffed into animal intestines. Sometimes haggis is sold in tins or a container which can simply be microwaved or oven-baked.

Haggis can be served in Scottish fast-food establishments deep fried in batter. Together with chips, this comprises a "haggis supper". A "haggis burger" is a patty of fried haggis served on a bun, and a "haggis pakora" is another deep fried variant, available in some Indian restaurants in Scotland.

A modern haggis variant often served in higher class restaurants is the "Flying Scotsman", which is chicken breast stuffed with haggis. This can in turn be wrapped in bacon to create a dish known as "Chicken Balmoral". Haggis can also be used as a substitute for minced beef in various recipes.

This is an authentic recipe from Scotland and the ingredients and methods of cooking may be unfamiliar but we hope you enjoy the results.

Ingredients

1 sheep's stomach, cleaned and thoroughly scalded, turned inside out and soaked overnight in cold salted water
heart and lungs of one lamb
450g/1lb beef or lamb trimmings, fat and lean
2 onions, finely chopped
225g/8oz oatmeal
1 tbsp salt
1 tsp ground black pepper
1 tsp ground dried coriander
1 tsp mace
1 tsp nutmeg
water, enough to cook the haggis
stock from lungs and trimmings

Preparation method

1. Wash the lungs, heart and liver (if using). Place in large pan of cold water with the meat trimmings and bring to the boil. Cook for about 2 hours.
2. When cooked, strain off the stock and set the stock aside.
3. Mince the lungs, heart and trimmings.
4. Put the minced mixture in a bowl and add the finely chopped onions, oatmeal and seasoning. Mix well and add enough stock to moisten the mixture. It should have a soft crumbly consistency.
5. Spoon the mixture into the sheep's stomach, so it's just over half full. Sew up the stomach with strong thread and prick a couple of times so it doesn't explode while cooking.
6. Put the haggis in a pan of boiling water (enough to cover it) and cook for 3 hours without a lid. Keep adding more water to keep it covered.
7. To serve, cut open the haggis and spoon out the filling. Serve with neeps (mashed swede or turnip) and tatties (mashed potatoes).



Traditional haggis designed to serve 2-3 people in a section of sheep's stomach



A haggis served with "bashed neeps and tatties"

2.5 Rack of lamb

A rack of lamb or *carré d'agneau* (though this may also refer to other cuts) is a cut of lamb cut perpendicularly to the spine, and including 16 ribs or chops. At retail, it is usually sold 'single' (sawn longitudinally and including the 8 ribs on one side only), but may also be sold as a "double rack of lamb", with the ribs on both sides.

Rack of lamb is usually roasted, sometimes first coated with an herbed breadcrumb persillade. The tips of the bones are sometimes decorated with paper frills resembling chefs' toques

Ingredients

1/2 cup fresh bread crumbs
2 tablespoons minced garlic
2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil

1 (7 bone) rack of lamb, trimmed and frenched
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees F (230 degrees C). Move oven rack to the center position.
2. In a large bowl, combine bread crumbs, garlic, rosemary, 1 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Toss in 2 tablespoons olive oil to moisten mixture. Set aside.
3. Season the rack all over with salt and pepper. Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large heavy oven proof skillet over high heat. Sear rack of lamb for 1 to 2 minutes on all sides. Set aside for a few minutes. Brush rack of lamb with the mustard. Roll in the bread crumb mixture until evenly coated. Cover the ends of the bones with foil to prevent charring.
4. Arrange the rack bone side down in the skillet. Roast the lamb in preheated oven for 12 to 18 minutes, depending on the degree of doneness you want. With a meat thermometer, take a reading in the center of the meat after 10 to 12 minutes and remove the meat, or let it cook longer, to your taste. Let it rest for 5 to 7 minutes, loosely covered, before carving between the ribs.



Rack of lamb

2.6 Scotch broth

This is a filling soup, originating in Scotland but now obtainable worldwide. The principal ingredients are usually barley, stewing or braising cuts of lamb or mutton (or, less authentically, beef), and root vegetables such as carrots, turnips or swedes. Greens, particularly cabbage and leeks, can also be added, usually towards the end of cooking to preserve flavour and texture. Dried pulses are often used too. The proportions and ingredients vary according to the recipe or availability.

Scotch broth is often sold ready-prepared in cans. As with many slow-cooked composite dishes, it is often claimed to taste even better when re-heated.

A method of preparation traditional to the country areas of the Outer Hebridean island of Lewis in Scotland is as follows. The method is very economical of fuel and highly conservative of nutritional value.

1. Put a suitable joint of mutton or lamb (often leg, shoulder or flank) in a closely fitting pot, cover with water, and simmer for about an hour.
2. Add barley, and pulses if liked, and simmer a further hour. [At this point, start to cook some boiled potatoes in their skins in a separate pot.]
3. Add chopped root vegetables and simmer until all done, adding shredded cabbage towards the end.

The resulting soup is served as a first course.

The meat, generously salted, is then sliced and served as a main course, with the carefully cooked potatoes heaped on an *asht*, often along with a jug of milk and sometimes butter. Diners help themselves by spearing potatoes with their forks and carefully peeling them with their table knives.



Scotch broth

2.7 Cawl

Traditionally, Welsh stew usually contains meat, normally cut into small pieces. This may be lamb or mutton (with the fat trimmed or skimmed off the broth during cooking), beef, pork or bacon, the bacon sometimes being added as an accompaniment to another meat. The vegetables used also vary, though leeks are particularly often included, as are potatoes and carrots along with celery and onion and maybe parsnip or turnip.

"Cawl cennin", or leek cawl, can be made without meat but using meat stock. In some areas cawl is often served with bread and cheese. These are served separately on a plate. The dish was traditionally cooked in an iron pot or cauldron over the fire. It is often said that cawl was originally the leftover meat and vegetables from the rest of the week boiled for another meal.

Normally cawl is eaten in a bowl as a one-course meal. In some parts of Wales however the broth from the cawl was eaten as a first course and the meat and vegetables eaten separately as a second course.

Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp lard or bacon fat
- 2 large onions, thickly sliced
- 1 medium swede, peeled and cut into 1in/2.5 cm cubes
- 4 large carrots, peeled thickly sliced.

4 leeks, cleaned and sliced
1 lb/ 450g potatoes, peeled and quartered
1 lb/450g mutton (eg best end of neck)
1 lb/ 450g piece of smoked bacon, cut in to 1in/2.5 cm cubes
1 bay leaf
Sprig fresh thyme
Salt and freshly ground pepper.

Preparation:

1. Melt the lard in a large stock pan over a high heat, take care not to burn the fat. Add all the vegetables except the potatoes, to the hot fat and brown for about 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove the vegetables with a slotted spoon and keep to one side.
2. Raise the heat and add the mutton to the pan and brown on all sides. Return the browned vegetables to the pan with the bacon pieces and herbs.
3. Cover the meat and vegetables with cold water, bring to the boil, then lower the heat to keep the water simmering and cook for 2 hours, or until the mutton is tender.
4. Lift the mutton from the pan and keep to one side. Add the potatoes and bring back to the boil and cook for another 20 mins, or until the potatoes are cooked. Meanwhile, once the mutton is cool enough to handle, cut into 2in/5cm cubes. Once the potatoes are cooked, add the mutton back to the pot and cook for a further 10 minutes.
5. Season well with salt and pepper and serve while piping hot. The broth from the pot can be served first as a soup, followed by the meat and vegetables, the choice is yours.



Cawl served with brown bread (soda bread)

2.8 Irish stew (Irish: *stobhach / stobhach Gaelach*) is a traditional stew made from lamb, or mutton, (mutton is used as it comes from less tender sheep over a year old and is fattier and has a stronger flavour) as well as potatoes, carrots, onions, and parsley.

Irish stew is a celebrated Irish dish, yet its composition is a matter of dispute. Purists maintain that the only acceptable and traditional ingredients are neck mutton chops or kid, potatoes, onions, and water. Others would add such items as carrots, turnips, and pearl barley; but the purists maintain they spoil the true flavour of the dish. The ingredients are boiled and simmered slowly for up to two hours. Mutton was the dominant ingredient because of the economic importance of sheep in their wool and milk produce and this ensured that only old or economically non-viable animals ended up in the cooking pot, where they needed hours of slow boiling. Irish stew is the product of a culinary tradition that relied almost exclusively on cooking over an open fire. It seems that Irish stew was recognized as early as about 1800.

---Oxford Companion to Food, Alan Davidson [Oxford University Press:Oxford] 1999 (p. 407)

Recipe

Ingredients

1lb/450g mutton or lamb
4 medium potatoes
4 medium carrots
4 medium onions
Sprig of fresh thyme or ½ teaspoon dried thyme
450 ml / ¾ pint of lamb stock (hot water and two lamb stock cubes)
2 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley
2 good shakes of Worcestershire Sauce (Lea & Perrins)
1 tablespoon of Pearl Barley (optional)
50g / 2oz butter
50g / 2oz flour Salt and pepper

Preparation:

1. Trim some of the fat from the mutton pieces and put the fat in a medium heated frying pan.
2. Set the oven on at 180C / 350F / Gas Mark 4.
3. Chop up the onions into rough chunks. Peel the potatoes and cut each into 4 parts. Scrape the carrots then cut into larger than normal chunks.
4. After 5 to 10 minutes, remove the fatty pieces from the frying pan and throw them away. Fry the mutton pieces in the fat for about three minutes at a medium temperature - turn half way through.
5. Put the meat in the casserole dish and fry the carrots and onions in the remaining fat for two minutes - turn frequently.
6. Put the onions and carrots over the meat in the casserole dish. Season with salt and pepper.

7. Add the Worcestershire Sauce (Lea & Perrins), the pearl barley and the stock. Finally add the potatoes on top, don't mix them in with the other ingredients. The aim is to let them be steam cooked over the other ingredients. Add some more salt and pepper to season the potatoes.
8. Put the casserole (covered) in the pre-heated oven and cook for 1 hour.
9. Make a roux (a mix of 50 / 50 butter and flour which will thicken the gravy in the casserole dish). Melt the butter on a medium heat in a pan, then whisk (or vigorously fork in) the flour. Cook for 2 minutes whisking all the time to prevent it sticking to the bottom of the pan.
10. Take the casserole dish from the oven and pour off most of the gravy into the pan of roux (be careful, the casserole dish will be hot). Mix in the thyme.
11. Quickly blend the gravy and roux together with your whisk or fork. Add the thickened gravy back into the casserole and scatter the top with the parsley. Check the seasoning and add salt and pepper if necessary. Put the casserole dish (covered) back in the oven for ten minutes.
12. Serve onto hot plates. No other vegetables are needed, they are all cooked and ready in the one casserole dish!



Irish stew

2.9 Scouse/Lobscouse

Scouse is a type of lamb or beef stew. The word comes from *lobscouse* (originally *lob's course*) or *lapskaus*, Norwegian for "stew" and refers to a meat based stew commonly eaten by sailors throughout Northern Europe, which became popular in seaports such as Liverpool.

A "pan of scouse" became a common meal in working class Liverpool. A thickened stew, usually of mutton or lamb with vegetables slow cooked to tenderise cheap cuts of meat, it takes its name from the Norwegian for stew, "lapskaus". The shortened and anglicised version of this Norwegian word is "scouse" and is part of a genre of

slang terms which refer to people by stereotypes of their dietary habits, e.g. Limey, Rosbif (American and French slang respectively for the English), and Kraut (an English colloquial *ethnonym* for a German).

Scouse is still a popular dish in Liverpool, where it is a staple of local pub and café menus, although recipes vary greatly and often include ingredients which are inconsistent with the thrifty roots of the dish. In its short form, "Scouse", the name eventually came into common English usage to describe the local accent of Liverpool, and a resident of Liverpool (as "Scouser").

The traditional recipe for Liverpool Scouse consists of a cheap cut of lamb, or in earlier days, mutton (such as breast, forequarter or "scrag end of neck"), removed from the bone and browned in a large saucepan, to which are added chopped onions, carrots, and water or meat stock, to which are added as many potatoes as possible. The sauce is not thickened, and it is usual to serve with preserved beetroot or red cabbage and white bread with butter. In the nearby town of St. Helens the dish is often called "Lobbies" and uses corned beef as the meat. An even more impoverished variety of this dish is 'blind Scouse', which features no meat, although it would likely have used cheap "soup bones" for flavouring the broth (prior to WW2, such meat bones could be sold to bone dealers after being used and for the same price as originally purchased from the butcher). Either recipe should more rightly be considered a potato stew. The dish is also popular in Leigh with local residents sometimes being referred to as 'Lobbygobblers'.

Ingredients

4 tbsp plain flour
salt and freshly ground black pepper
1.4kg/3lb lamb neck fillet, cut into large pieces
1 tbsp vegetable oil
2 onions, diced
1.2 litres/2 pints chicken stock
3 large carrots, diced
900g/2lb King Edward potatoes, quartered
2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp brown sauce
To serve
pickled beetroot
brown sauce
crusty bread and butter

Preparation method

1. Tip the flour into a large freezer bag and season generously with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Add the pieces of lamb, seal the bag and shake thoroughly to coat the lamb in the seasoned flour. Remove the lamb and shake off any excess flour.
2. Heat the oil in a large heatproof casserole (or saucepan) over a medium heat. Add the onions and fry for 8-10 minutes, or until softened. Increase the heat to

medium-high, add the lamb and fry for a further 8-10 minutes, turning regularly, until browned all over.

3. Drain off any excess fat from the pan then pour in the stock. Stir in the carrots, half of the potatoes and the Worcestershire sauce. Stir well and make sure all of the ingredients are covered by the stock, topping up with boiling water if necessary. Bring the mixture to the boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover the casserole or pan with a lid and simmer very gently for three hours, stirring occasionally and topping up with boiling water as necessary.
4. After three hours, add the remaining potatoes and stir in the brown sauce. Simmer for a further 1½ hours.
5. Check the seasoning, adding salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste, then serve with pickled beetroot, brown sauce and crusty bread and butter on the side.



Lobsouse

2.10 Shepherd's Pie

There seems to be a continual debate as to what ingredients should be used in a traditional Shepherd's pie. As with many age old recipes, it is often difficult to give a definitive answer. However, there are two ingredients without which it would not be a shepherd's pie. First lamb - be it fresh lamb, cooked lamb, minced lamb, chopped lamb or leftover lamb from a Sunday roast - the meat used must be lamb. The clue is in the name - Shepherd i.e. sheep. The second ingredient is mashed potato for the topping. Got to be mashed for a traditional Shepherds Pie - not sliced potato or cubed potato - mashed potato.

Traditionally, not many vegetables were added to the mix other than onions although it has become customary to add carrots.

Recipe

Ingredients:

450g/1lb Lean Minced Lamb

(Minced beef can be substituted if preferred)

1 Large Onion, chopped

3 Tomatoes, chopped

1 Heaped teasp Dried Mixed Herbs

3 teasp Worcestershire Sauce

150 - 300ml/5 - 10 fl.oz. Stock (depending on taste)

450g/1lb Potatoes

25g/1oz Butter (optional)

2 tbsp Oil

50g/2oz Mature Cheddar, grated (optional)

Instructions:

1. Peel the potatoes and cut into chunks. Place in a Large pan of salted water, bring to the boil and cook for 20 minutes or until soft. Preheat the oven to 200C, 400F, Gas mark 6.

2. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large saucepan and fry the onions until soft and golden. Add the mince and brown then add the chopped tomatoes, mixed herbs, Worcestershire sauce, stock, salt and pepper. Stir well, partly cover and cook for at least 15 minutes. The longer you cook the mince, the more developed the flavour will be.

3. Drain the potatoes and mash well, adding the Butter if using.

4. Place the mince in an ovenproof dish and top with the mashed potato. You will find it easier to place small spoonfuls of potato around the outside first, gradually smoothing these together, then placing more spoonfuls in the centre, again gradually smoothing together.

6. Dot with butter or top with the grated cheese, if using and bake in the centre of the oven for 30 - 40 minutes until golden brown.



Shepherd's pie

2.11 Barnsley Chop

A Barnsley Chop is a lamb chop. The dish is thought to have originated at the King's Head Hotel on Market Hill in 1849. On market day, farmers were served a 'very large chop' known as the Barnsley Chop. When Barnsley Town Hall was opened in 1933, the then Prince of Wales and other guests were served the Barnsley Chop. The weight of each chop was 1lb 6oz, and just two chops came from each animal. A civic review in 1949 said the chop comprised the first three ribs after the shoulder, and only two such chops can be obtained from a sheep. It was then dressed and hung for about 10 days, before being cooked by a special process to ensure tenderness. The original chop (which looked like a large lamb cutlet developed into a FULL saddle of lamb being quartered, making four larger portions from each animal.

Recipe

Ingredients:

4 large Barnsley chops
4 sprigs fresh rosemary
Freshly ground salt and pepper
2 handfuls fresh mint leaves
1 tsp sugar
75ml malt vinegar

Instructions:

1. Pierce the flesh of each chop with the rosemary, season well and cook them on the barbecue for 10-20 minutes, depending on how rare you like them.
2. Roughly chop the mint, mix with the sugar and vinegar, and spoon over the cooked lamb. Serve with a jacket potato or honey-glazed pumpkin wedges.



Uncooked Barnsley chops

Conclusions

As can be seen from the wide range of examples depicted here, lamb is a mainstay of the British diet and has been for centuries, reflecting the importance of sheep and sheep meat production in the UK. Lamb is not a meat for shepherds or sheep farmers only but an integral part of the national cuisine. What is perhaps remarkable to people from other countries is the lack of milk production and the absence of milk and milk products made from sheep. This reflects the historical emphasis on meat and wool and the way the breeds were developed to favour these characteristics as well as the fact the dairy farming using cattle is another large-scale agricultural practice so that almost all the necessary dairy products come from cow's milk.

What is not covered in the report is the role of sheep meat in the cuisine of ethnic minorities in the UK and of course the rise in popularity of food from the Indian sub-continent. This is another developing story.