

Courtesy of Chef Gary Caldwell

MAINS Chef Gary Caldwell

Lamb ragu from Atlanta Chef Gary Caldwell

By Beth McKibben · Rough Draft Atlanta, 4/16/2025

Ingredients

- [ ] 2 Tbsp olive oil
- [ ] 5 lbs ground lamb
- [ ] 1 onion (blended)
- [ ] 1 celery stalk (blended)
- [ ] 1 carrot (blended)
- [ ] 2 Tbsp tomato paste
- [ ] 1 cup red wine
- [ ] 1 Tbsp fennel seed
- [ ] 5 cups tomato (puree)
- [ ] 3 Tbsp kosher salt
- [ ] 1 Tbsp ground black pepper

Directions

1. Preheat oil.
2. Add ground lamb and brown evenly.
3. Once browned, add fennel seed and blended vegetables and sauté for five minutes, then add tomato paste.
4. Once the mixture begins to get sticky, add red wine and reduce the heat by half.
5. Add tomato puree and salt and pepper. Reduce heat to low and simmer for 30 minutes.
6. Serve ragu atop pasta of choice. Caldwell recommends pappardelle.

The story

Today we're sharing a recipe for lamb ragu from Marcus Bar & Grille chef Gary Caldwell, a comforting dish he described as like "coming home and eating mom's spaghetti and meat sauce."

Based on his grandmother's recipe, Caldwell's recipe calls for ground lamb instead of beef and is garnished with freshly shaved parmesan cheese.

"Growing up, we used American cheese, which made it extra gooey," Caldwell recalled of his grandmother's beef ragu. "Sometimes she would throw in hot dogs to stretch it out to have enough to feed the family, and my aunt would make Indian fry bread. Other times, we would have po'boy bread and make a hot pocket."

Caldwell added the lamb ragu to the menu at Marcus Bar & Grille to offer diners a hearty yet homey dish that might remind them of childhood.

"A lot of the dishes I do at the restaurant are to make people reminisce about the simpler times," Caldwell explained.

He recommended pairing the lamb ragu with a nice bold red or a sparkling shiraz, boasting tasting notes of red fruits, fresh herbs, black pepper, and a hint of vanilla. The sparkling shiraz, in particular, will help cut the richness of the lamb.

Check out Chef Gary Caldwell's recipe for **lamb ragu** below:

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