

Photo: Tal Baum

MAINS Chef Tal Baum

Tal Baum's slow-cooked pomegranate lamb shoulder for Passover

By Logan C. Ritchie · Rough Draft Atlanta, 4/3/2025

Ingredients

- [ ] 4 lbs lamb shoulder (bone-in)
- [ ] 4 large onions, chopped
- [ ] 1 head garlic, cloves peeled
- [ ] 1 cup fresh pomegranate juice
- [ ] 8 Tbsp silan (date molasses)
- [ ] 3/4 cup olive oil
- [ ] 1 Tbsp fresh thyme
- [ ] 2 Tbsp sweet paprika (preferably in oil)
- [ ] 1 Tbsp baharat or allspice spice
- [ ] Salt and black pepper to taste
- [ ] Pomegranate seeds and chopped dates to garnish

Directions

MARINADE PROCESS

1. In a large bowl, mix pomegranate juice, silan, olive oil, thyme, and spices.
2. Massage the lamb shoulder with the marinade and refrigerate for at least four hours or overnight for best results.

COOKING THE LAMB

1. In a large pot, sauté the onions in a bit of olive oil until golden.
2. Remove the lamb from the marinade and sear it in the pot for about three to four minutes per side until browned.
3. Add the peeled garlic cloves.
4. Pour in the reserved marinade, then add enough water to just cover the lamb.
5. Adjust seasoning if needed, and bring to a boil.
6. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for at least three hours, checking occasionally to ensure the liquid doesn't evaporate completely.

7. Continue cooking until the lamb is very tender and easily falling off the bone.

SERVING

1. Remove the lamb from the pot and place it on a serving dish.
2. Strain the cooking liquids and transfer back to the pot. Cook on low to medium heat until the sauce has reduced and thickens. Add salt as needed.
3. Pour the sauce reduction over the lamb and garnish with pomegranate seeds and chopped dates.
4. Serve alongside potatoes.

The story

Tal Baum, the founder of Oliva Restaurant Group, owns four restaurants in Atlanta, including casual Israeli spot Rina, West Coast-inspired Carmel, Italian market and bistro Bellina Alimentari, and Atrium bistro and martini bar.

While Baum hosted an outdoor Passover seder in 2024, this year, she's meeting her family for a Mediterranean vacation where they'll make Passover dinner together.

"I'm really blessed because everybody in my family likes to cook. My sister is a great cook. My mom is a great cook. My mother-in-law, too," Baum said.

Regardless of who's cooking, it won't be brisket. Baum thinks of the meat as a traditional, Jewish-American cut that "always tastes the same no matter how hard you try."

"I am originally from Israel, and I cook a lot of eastern Israeli food at home, and I just don't do brisket. You can't get brisket in Israel unless we special order it from the butcher," Baum explained.

She apologized in advance for potentially offending brisket lovers and admitted that brisket can take just as much time and TLC as her preferred Passover protein: lamb shoulder.

"Springtime is the time of year when you eat fresh produce, and you have a lot of artichokes, peas, fava beans, spring garlic, and chives. All those really go well with lamb, and it's a pretty traditional dish to serve for Passover back in Israel," she said.

Baum described bringing the lamb to the table surrounded by green vegetables as festive. And she considers her recipe easy to follow.

"It does take a lot of time, but that's the magic of the holidays," Baum said. "When you're cooking for your loved ones, that's usually how you are able to develop really deep and complex flavors that you may not have the time to work on when you're cooking during the week."

The key to Baum's recipe is finding grass-fed lamb shank. While the recipe is fairly simple to follow, when cooking lemon sauce for hours, "deep flavors develop, and the outcome is so much more than the sum of the ingredients."

Once the lamb is in the pot, go about the rest of the day, she said. The meat will marinate for four hours and cook for three. Baum typically serves her lamb with a green salad tossed in citrus vinaigrette, rice with herbs, and fava beans inspired by a Persian friend. The lamb also goes well with potatoes roasted in lamb drippings.

"I like to serve Israeli wines during the holidays to support the wineries," Baum said, suggesting wines from the regions of Canaan or Galilee.

Slow-cooked lamb with a rich, sweet, and tangy sauce: the secret to this fall-off-the-bone lamb recipe is time. Don't rush the process. Marinating the meat for a few hours (or overnight) and then cooking it low and slow for several hours makes this lamb spectacular and a staple at Baum's family Passover table.

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