

Texas Nordic: An Alternate Nordic Lamb Stew with an Icelandic Twist



Texas Nordic

A few years ago, I grabbed some New Scandinavian Cooking DVDs. Since graduating culinary school many years ago, I really wanted to learn about our own culture's background for food but resources online were limited. While they don't do specific Icelandic dishes on this one, they do point to our Nordic ingredients with some foundations of how people still like to enjoy eating. Lamb, salmon, herring, dill, and cheese have remained simple staples of our cultural diet. Most of us do enjoy great pizza, however!

Around this same time, I found a book titled "The Culinary Saga of New Iceland: Recipes from the Shores of Lake Winnipeg". It had much to do with Icelanders moving to North America and creating dishes at home with Icelandic influence yet made with ingredients they could find locally. It inspired me to consider the adaptation of traditional ingredients and flavor found here.

The following recipe is one I adapted from a program featuring Andreas Viestad of Norway. He called it his "Norwegian Hunter's Stew" and it uses lamb, juniper, a bit of meal for roasting the meat, some cabbage, onions, skyr, and even Icelandic beer. This dish also includes a cooking technique and grain from our northern neighbor Orkney. On a cold day, this makes for a hearty meal. It pairs well with red wine, beer and even mead. It varies from our traditional Kjötsúpa, so I've called it our "alternate" of "heavy" lamb stew.



Ingredients

- Lamb shoulder (or any other cut of lamb you like)
- ½ of a cabbage
- 1tbsp of juniper berries
- 1 tbsp thyme
- 2 tbsp black peppercorns
- 1 ½ cups flour (or beremeal if you can find it)
- ¾ brick of gjetost or brunost
- 2 onions (sliced thin)
- 2 cans of Einstok Icelandic beer
- ¾ cups of Skyr
- Sea salt and pepper to taste
- A large lidded clay pot or slow cooker. Instapot maybe?
- Large pan for frying meat and onions



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Step 1

Slice your onions and grate the cheese and set them aside separately. Heat a large frying pan with a bit of oil on medium high then cut your lamb into large bite sized chunks. Once you've cut up your lamb, mix in a bit of salt and pepper, then dust the meat all over with flour. Alternately you can use beremeal, which is a "Viking" grain we used in Orkney a millennia ago. It's still popular there for breads and beer making. The word beremeal even means "beer meal", and shares origins with the word barley. Barely means "beer-like".

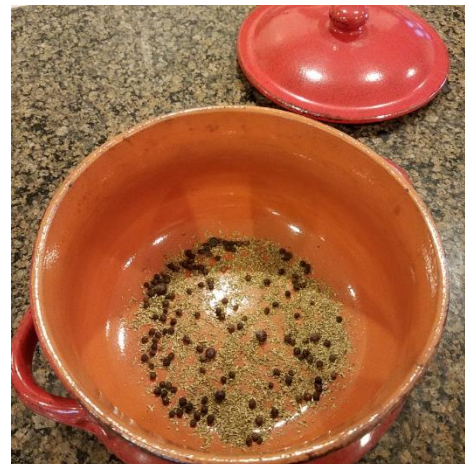


Step 2

Brown the lamb in the oil. You want to caramelize the sides nicely but you don't need to cook it all the way through, though. You'll be slow cooking all of this for at least 2 hours and the meat should come out so tender you can cut it with a plastic fork.

Step 3

While the lamb is browning, drop the crushed juniper berries in your baking pot along with the peppercorns and thyme. Shred the cabbage and also add that to the pot. Next add the shredded gjetost on top of the cabbage.



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Step 4

When the meat is done to your liking, put it into the pot on top of the gjetost and cabbage.

Step 5

Now you can add all of those sliced onions to the frying pan on top of your lamb drippings and all that nicely browned protein. After the onions have sautéed a good bit, add around ½ cup of the flour and make sure it's all incorporated into the onions. No lumps!



Step 6

Pour the 2 cans of Icelandic beer over the onions in the frying pan. Keep stirring and scraping all of this to make a rich onion gravy. Once mixed, and bubbling nicely, pour this on top of the meat in your slow cooker. Now your pot is ready to go into your cold oven with a lid on and the temp now set at 400-420F. You'll want to let this slow cook for 2 to 2.5 hours.



Step 7

Enjoy a nice drink while you wait? Save enough for the stew. Skál!

Step 8

It's done! When you take this out of the oven or your Instapot, mix in the skyr and give it all a good stir, making sure to pull those juniper berries and peppercorns up from the bottom of the pot into your stew. The lamb also works great with a bit of fresh rosemary if you chop some and add to the top of the dish when serving.

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You can alternately use potatoes or swede in place of cabbage, or you can mix all three. Letting this cook low and slow in the oven is the real secret. It goes good with a side of greens, but since there's cabbage, herbs, and dairy in here it is a fairly complete rustic meal.

If you're not that big a fan of juniper berries, you can trade those out for caraway seeds.

The addition of the skyr at the end helps add to the rich creaminess of the stew, and it's incredibly good for you. It's not just for dessert, you know. I hope you enjoy! Skál!

