

Berbere Lamb and Chickpea Stew •

Ingredients

Dried chickpeas	2 cups	Chicken broth or lamb stock . .	3 cups
Kosher salt	5 Tbsp.	Diced tomatoes	28 oz. (2 cans)
Lamb shoulder/shank*	3 lbs.	Dried apricots	1½ cups
Black pepper (for lamb)	1 tsp.	Fresh cilantro	1 cup
Vegetable oil	¼ cup	Fresh lemon juice	½ cup
Onions, large	2	Honey	3 Tbsp.
Garlic cloves	8-10	Pomegranate arils (optional) . . .	½ cup
Berbere spice blend	5 Tbsp.	Tzatziki (optional)	for serving
Tomato paste	6 Tbsp.	Harissa (optional)	for table

Beef chuck shoulder may substitute for lamb (same method and timing)

Directions

Night Before: Combine 2 cups **chickpeas**, water, and 3 Tbsp. **salt** in a large bowl. Cover and refrigerate overnight (8-12 hours).

Day of Preparation: Preheat oven to 300 °F— Drain and rinse soaked 2 cups **chickpeas** — Pat dry **lamb** and cut into 1½” cubes — Season **lamb** with 1 Tbsp. **salt** and 1 tsp. **pepper** — Dice 2 large **onions** and mince 8-10 **garlic** cloves; combine in *Small Bowl #1* (aromatics) — Chop 1½ cups **apricots** into ¼” pieces; set aside in *Medium Bowl #1* — Chop 1 cup **cilantro** — Combine chopped **cilantro**, ½ cup **lemon juice**, and 3 Tbsp. **honey** in *Medium Bowl #2* (finishing)

1. Heat 6-quart enameled dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add 2 Tbsp. **oil**. Working in 3-4 batches to avoid crowding, brown **lamb cubes** on multiple sides until deeply caramelized, about 8-10 minutes per batch, adding more **oil** as needed (up to ¼ cup total). Transfer browned **lamb** to *Large Bowl #1* and set aside.
2. Reduce heat to medium. If pot is dry, add final portion of **oil** (remaining from ¼ cup). Add **onions** and **garlic** (*Small Bowl #1*) and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and golden brown, about 8-10 minutes.
3. Add 3 Tbsp. **berbere** to the pot. Stir constantly for 45-60 seconds until spice is darkened and very fragrant. Add 6 Tbsp. **tomato paste** and stir constantly, scraping to prevent scorching, for 2-3 minutes until paste is brick-red and caramelized.

4. Add remaining 2 Tbsp. **berbere** and 1 Tbsp. **salt**; stir to combine. Immediately add 3 cups **chicken broth** and use a wooden spoon to scrape bottom of pot vigorously, releasing all browned bits. Add 28 oz. (2 cans) **diced tomatoes** with their juices. Bring to a simmer.
5. Return browned **lamb** and any accumulated juices (*Large Bowl #1*) to pot. Add drained **chickpeas** and **apricots** (*Medium Bowl #1*). Stir to combine. The liquid should come about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the solids; add additional **broth** if needed.
6. Bring to a full simmer on stovetop. Cover with tight-fitting lid and transfer to preheated $300^{\circ}F$ oven.
7. Braise for *4 hours*, checking at $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours. **Lamb** should be pull-apart tender and 2 cups **chickpeas** should be creamy. If liquid level seems low at the $3\frac{1}{2}$ hour check, add $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 cup hot **broth**. If stew seems too thin, crack lid slightly for final *30 minutes*.
8. Remove from oven. If sauce needs reducing, place uncovered pot on stovetop over medium heat and simmer for *5-10 minutes* until thickened to coat the back of a spoon. If desired, skim excess fat from surface.
9. Stir in remaining **apricots** (*Medium Bowl #1*) and **cilantro**, **lemon juice**, and **honey** (*Medium Bowl #2*). Taste and adjust seasoning with additional **salt** if needed. Let rest for *10-15 minutes* before serving.
10. Serve over **couscous** or **cooked rice**, topped with **pomegranate arils** and **tzatziki**, with **harissa** on the side.

Equipment Required

- 6-quart enameled dutch oven with tight-fitting lid
- Large mixing bowl (for soaking chickpeas)
- Small prep bowls (1)
- Medium prep bowls (2)
- Large prep bowl (1)
- Cutting board and sharp knife
- Wooden spoon or heatproof spatula
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Ladle
- Timer

Mise en Place

- Small Bowl #1 — aromatics: diced 2 large **onions**, minced 8-10 **garlic** cloves
- Medium Bowl #1 — chopped **apricots** (1½ cups total, used in two stages)
- Medium Bowl #2 — finishing: 1 cup chopped **cilantro**, ½ cup **lemon juice**, 3 Tbsp. **honey**
- Large Bowl #1 — browned **lamb** (set aside after browning, about 3 lbs., with accumulated juices)
- Soak 2 cups **chickpeas** the night before in salted water (8-12 hours)
- Drain and rinse **chickpeas** before beginning active cooking
- Pat dry and cut **lamb** into uniform 1½" cubes; season with **salt** and **pepper** before browning
- If using whole lamb shoulder, trim excess fat but leave some for flavor
- Prep all aromatics and measure all spices before beginning—once you start browning, the process moves quickly

- Have **broth** ready and warm for easier deglazing
- Allow *45-60 minutes* total for prep work on day of cooking

Ingredient Tips

- Lamb shoulder is ideal for braising due to marbling and connective tissue; leg meat is leaner and won't be as tender
- Quality **berbere** blends vary significantly in heat level and complexity; taste yours to gauge intensity before adding
- San Marzano or fire-roasted **diced tomatoes** add extra depth
- Turkish or California **apricots** are ideal; avoid overly sweet or sugared varieties
- Homemade **lamb stock** elevates the dish significantly

Preparation Tips

- Don't rush the browning—deep caramelization is the foundation of flavor
- Work in small batches; crowding the pot steams meat instead of browning it
- The **tomato paste** will threaten to scorch; keep stirring and scraping constantly during step 3
- Vigorous deglazing in step 4 is critical—every bit of fond adds flavor
- Starting the braise at a full simmer on the stovetop ensures immediate cooking when transferred to oven
- If your dutch oven lid doesn't seal tightly, cover pot with foil before adding lid to minimize evaporation
- Check liquid level at 3½ hours; ovens and pots vary, so adjustment may be needed

- **Lamb** texture varies by cut quality; check tenderness and extend cooking if needed
- The stew will continue to thicken as it rests; it should be slightly looser than desired final consistency when removed from oven
- Add finishing ingredients (**cilantro**, **lemon juice**, **honey**) only when reheating to serve
- If freezing, slightly undercook (reduce time by *30 minutes*) as reheating continues cooking

Make Ahead & Storage

- This stew benefits from sitting; make up to *3 days* ahead and refrigerate
- Leftover stew thickens significantly; thin with **broth** or water when reheating