



Roasted Rack of Lamb with Sweet Mint-Almond Relish

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 16: A Hearty Fall Feast

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

We slowly roast our rack of lamb to ensure that its interior is uniformly rosy and juicy and then leave it in the oven until it reaches serving temperature. This is because it browns so quickly when we give it a final sear in a hot skillet that its temperature doesn't rise. This speedy finish is possible because the fat cap warms up in the oven so it can easily reach the temperatures necessary for browning reactions to occur. We season the rack with a spiced salt that complements the lamb's flavor, and a simple relish dresses up the roast.

Serves 4 to 6

We prefer the milder taste and bigger size of domestic lamb, but you may substitute imported lamb from New Zealand and Australia. Since imported racks are generally smaller, in step 1 season each rack with ½ teaspoon of salt mixture and reduce the cooking time to 50 to 70 minutes. A rasp-style grater makes quick work of turning the garlic into a paste.

INGREDIENTS

Lamb

- 2** (1 3/4- to 2-pound) racks of lamb, fat trimmed to 1/8 to 1/4 inch and rib bones frenched
- Kosher salt
- 1** teaspoon ground anise
- 1** teaspoon vegetable oil

Relish

- 1/2** cup minced fresh mint
- 1/4** cup sliced almonds, toasted and chopped fine
- 1/4** cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2** tablespoons red currant jelly
- 4** teaspoons red wine vinegar
- 2** teaspoons Dijon mustard
- Kosher salt and pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. FOR THE LAMB: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 250 degrees. Using sharp knife, cut slits in fat cap, spaced 1/2 inch apart, in crosshatch pattern (cut down to, but not into, meat). Combine 2 tablespoons salt and anise in bowl. Rub 3/4 teaspoon salt mixture over entire surface of each rack and into slits. Reserve remaining salt mixture. Place racks, bone side down, on wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet. Roast until meat registers 125 degrees for medium-rare or 130 degrees for medium, 1 hour 5 minutes to 1 hour 25 minutes.

2. FOR THE RELISH: While lamb roasts, combine mint, almonds, olive oil, jelly, vinegar, and mustard in bowl. Season with salt and

pepper to taste. Let stand at room temperature for at least 1 hour before serving.

3. Heat vegetable oil in 12-inch skillet over high heat until just smoking. Place 1 rack, bone side up, in skillet and cook until well browned, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to carving board. Pour off all but 1 teaspoon fat from skillet and repeat browning with second rack. Tent racks with aluminum foil and let rest for 20 minutes. Cut between ribs to separate chops and sprinkle cut side of chops with 1/2 teaspoon salt mixture. Serve, passing relish and remaining salt mixture separately.

TECHNIQUE

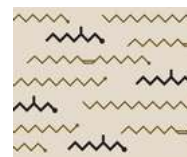
THE FUNK IS IN THE FAT

Unique branched-chain fatty acids are responsible for many of lamb's musky flavors. To find out just how important these fatty acids are, we combined ground lean lamb meat and fat to create two blends: 90 percent lean meat/10 percent fat and 80 percent lean meat/20 percent fat. When we made burgers from the blends as well as from 100 percent lean meat and rated the intensity of the lamb flavor, tasters unanimously found the meat/fat blends to have more characteristic lamb flavor than the 100 percent lean patties. When it comes to lamb, the old adage that fat equals flavor can't be overstated: Trimming some fat will result in a milder taste.

BEEF FAT: Nonbranched-chain fatty acids



LAMB FAT: Branched-chain fatty acids



TECHNIQUE

EASY AS 1-2-3

Putting an impressive roast on the table doesn't have to be stressful or take all day. Our rack of lamb is ready in less than 2 hours.

1. SEASON: There's no need to salt ahead of time. Because of the insulating bones and thin layer of fat, rack of lamb sprinkled with salt right before roasting is just as juicy as meat salted an hour in advance.



2. SLOW-ROAST: For juicy meat that's a rosy medium-rare from center to edge, we simply roast the racks in a 250-degree oven until they reach 125 degrees, 1 hour 5 minutes to 1 hour 25 minutes.



3. SEAR: The fat cap warms up in the oven, so when it hits a hot skillet, it quickly reaches the temperature necessary for browning. Because the rack browns in just 2 minutes, none of the meat overcooks during this step.



