

Made in Italy

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Grilled Lamb Chops with Asparagus

FREE RECIPE FROM *MADE IN ITALY* BY SILVIA COLLOCA, *AGNELLO ALLA GRIGLIA CON ASPARAGI, GRILLED LAMB CHOPS WITH ASPARAGUS*, PAGE 164.

One undeniable truth about Abruzzese cooking is that its simplicity is deeply reliant on excellent produce. When you sit at the table of local trattorias or agriturismi, you are never presented with a menu, merely a waiter (generally the son or husband of the lady labouring in the kitchen), idly telling you what the core ingredient of that day's menu is. If you are in Abruzzo and they suggest agnello (lamb), nod enthusiastically. Forget about slow-roasted leg of lamb studded with garlic, rubbed in herbs and drizzled with a fancy jus. What you will be served are chops, grilled perfectly over coals, seasoned with plenty of salt. And maybe a single lemon wedge on the side. Maybe. Sometimes, however, you may come across a slightly more inventive cook and will find that your chops have been massaged with a heavenly garlic, rosemary and extra virgin olive oil paste. I usually have a preference for a simple squeeze of lemon over my grilled chops, but when I tried these divine savoury lollipops, I gobbled up everything on my plate and immediately wished for more.

Serves 4

2 cloves garlic, peeled and left whole
2–3 sprigs rosemary (or try oregano)
salt flakes
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
2 tablespoons white wine
16 lamb chops
16 spears asparagus, trimmed if necessary
mint leaves, to garnish
lemon cheeks, to serve



1. Place the garlic and rosemary in a mortar, add a pinch of salt and pound with the pestle until the garlic breaks down into a paste. Add the olive oil and wine and mix well. Set aside.
2. Bash the chops with a meat mallet. This process will tenderise the meat as well as increase the surface area the marinade has access to. Massage the chops with the garlic marinade, making sure they are evenly coated. Place the chops in a non-reactive bowl or plastic container, cover with a lid or plastic film and marinate in the fridge for 30 minutes.
3. Blanch the asparagus in salted boiling water for 1–2 minutes or until tender, but still firm to the touch. Drain, then rinse under cold water to preserve the vivid green colour. Season to taste with salt, then finish with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil.
4. Heat up a chargrill pan or a coal barbecue. Cook the chops on both sides over very high heat until scorched but still succulent. The cooking time depends on the thickness of the chops and of course your personal taste, but as a guide, for medium, cook on both sides for 2–3 minutes. Cover the chops loosely with foil and rest for 5 minutes before serving.
5. Arrange the chops and asparagus on a large serving platter and garnish with mint leaves. Squeeze a little lemon juice over the top and serve hot.