

Overnight Lamb Shoulder — The Science-First Version

A collagen-rich cut turned spoonable by time alone — dry-brined overnight, slow-roasted while you sleep, then blasted for the bark.

Yield: **10–12** (one shoulder) Active: **20 min** Total: **~12 h** Oven: **115–235°C** Done: **90–95°C** internal

WHERE IT WAS BORN

The cheap, hard-working cut the whole Mediterranean slow-cooks — Greek *kleftiko*, Moroccan *mechoui*, Italian *spalla*. The feast roast of shepherds, not aristocrats.

EATEN, AUTHENTICALLY

Pulled or carved with its own jus, soft polenta or roast potatoes and greens — a centerpiece built for a crowd and a long table.

HOW IT'S USED NOW

The Sunday/feast roast; the leftovers are gold — *ragù*, shepherd's pie, flatbread tacos. Feed the crew twice off one cut.

INGREDIENTS

WEIGHT (G) · CUPS / VOLUME IN RIGHT COLUMN

ROAST

Bone-in lamb shoulder	3kg	
Fine sea salt (<i>dry brine</i>)	45g	3 tbsps
Garlic, crushed (<i>a head</i>)	30g	
Rosemary (+ <i>thyme</i>)	15g	
Ground cumin	6g	2½ tsp
Ground coriander	6g	2½ tsp
Black pepper	4g	1¼ tsp
Olive oil (<i>for the blast</i>)	30g	2¼ tbsps

TRAY

Onions + carrots (<i>a bed</i>)	—	
Stock or water	250g	1 cup

THE RATIO — SALT 1.5% OF THE MEAT

Dry brine = 1.5% salt by the shoulder's weight; aromatics to taste. Everything scales off the cut — weigh the shoulder, take 1.5%.

Kit: deep roasting tray + rack · foil · probe thermometer · the patience to leave it alone overnight

METHOD

- Dry-brine (night before).** Crosshatch the fat cap; rub 45g salt + garlic, rosemary, cumin, coriander, pepper all over. Uncovered in the fridge overnight.

— *Salt penetrates and seasons deep; the surface dries for a better crust.* — McGee 2004
- Low slow-roast.** On a bed of onion + carrot, 250g stock in the base, covered tight with foil. **115°C (240°F), 8–12 h**, to internal **90–95°C** (the bone wiggles free).

— *Collagen melts to gelatin low and slow without squeezing out moisture; the window is wide and forgiving.* — McGee; López-Alt
- The blast.** Uncover, drizzle 30g oil, crank to **235°C (455°F)**, 20–30 min, to a dark, crisp top.

— *High heat drives the Maillard bark you can't get at low temperature.* — McGee 2004
- Rest & pull.** Rest 30 min tented; pull into chunks or carve.

Done: internal **90–95°C**, the meat pulls with a spoon and the bone slips free, dark crisp top. **Rest 30 min before pulling.**

The jus — tip the tray juices into a pan, skim the fat, reduce, check seasoning. The onion-carrot bed has done the work; that is your gravy. Spoon over the pulled meat.

ONE SHOULDER, TWO SERVICES

Serve the roast hot with jus; the next day the shred becomes **ragù** for pasta, a **shepherd's pie**, or **tacos / flatbreads**. One cheap cut, two crew meals.

ELEVATION

TIER 1 — NO EXTRA TIME

- Anchovy + garlic studs** — melt in, season deep
- Wine or cider** — a splash in the tray
- Longer brine** — 24 h is even better

TIER 2 — WORTH IT

- Kleftiko** — seal in paper/foil, skip the blast
- Harissa + ras el hanout** — Moroccan
- Finish on coals** — smoke + char

TIER 3 — SERVICE

- Pull + crisp** bits for texture
- Mint / salsa verde** to cut the richness
- Bone-marrow jus** for depth

TROUBLESHOOT

Tough / chewy	Under-done → it needs MORE time to 90–95°C, not less
Dry	Oven too high / lid off → keep it low, keep it covered
No bark	Skipped the blast → uncover, 235°C, 20–30 min
Greasy jus	Fat not skimmed → spoon it off the tray juices

CHARTER PREP & STORAGE

Hands-off	In at night, ready for lunch — the sleeping-galley roast
Holds	Warm, tented, 1–2 h without drying
Reheats	Beautifully, in its own juices
Freeze	Pulled, in jus, 1 month
Best for	Passage / yard nights; big covers; a cheap cut