

How to Cook a Leg of Lamb

At my grocery store, there were two choices of leg of lamb being offered. Both were from Australia.



I am going to demonstrate how to cook the smaller 5-pound boneless roast shown on the top in the picture above. The larger 9-pound roast on the bottom is a "bone-in" cut. For beginner cooks, the smaller boneless roast is easier to carve. Besides, it just fit into my 15-inch long roasting pan, and my larger roasting pan is not as photogenic!

The steps involved in making this boneless leg of lamb are:
Make a "spice-rub" with garlic, thyme, rosemary, oregano and black pepper.

Rub it all over the roast.

Put the roast in a plastic bag

Pour fresh lemon juice, olive oil and wine over the roast in the bag
Put the bag in the refrigerator to marinate for several hours or overnight.

Remove the lamb from the bag and roast it in the oven.
The Marinade (Marinate is the verb, and marinade is the noun. So, you marinate the lamb with a marinade. Got it? Who's on first?)

Step 1. First make a spice-rub by measuring out:

- 3 cloves of garlic, crushed
- 2 teaspoons of dry oregano
- 2 teaspoons of dry thyme
- 2 teaspoons of dry rosemary
- 1/4 teaspoon of fresh ground black pepper



Put these ingredients into a small bowl...



...and mix everything together



Now, for the liquid part of the marinade, measure out:
1/2 cup of olive oil
1/2 cup of lemon juice, fresh squeezed
2 cups of dry red wine



My wine merchant suggested a very reasonably priced Merlot (\$8) for the dry red wine.

The Boneless Leg of Lamb

(FYI – It's just the hind legs that are used for "leg of lamb")
Rather than working directly on the counter top, I set the lamb down on some paper towels on a baking sheet. This is more sanitary.

Cut the plastic outer wrapping off the lamb, making sure not to cut through the netting as well. (If you bought your lamb at a butcher shop, it may well be hand-tied with string instead of netting.) The netting (or string) holds the lamb together in that nice shape. Do not remove it until after the lamb is roasted.



Step 2. Rub the garlic dry-rub spice mixture all over the lamb.



Step 3. Put the lamb in a large plastic bag and set it on a dish. I used a two gallon sized zip-lock bag. (You need the dish just in case the bag leaks when you put it in your refrigerator. You wouldn't want the marinade to spill all over the inside of your refrigerator!)



Step 4. Pour the lemon juice, olive oil and red wine over the lamb (in the bag.)



Squeeze out as much of the air as possible from the bag, and seal it closed. As a precaution against the bag leaking, wrap a second bag around the marinating lamb.



Step 5. Set the bag in a dish and let the lamb marinate in the refrigerator for several hours or overnight -up to 24 hours.

Step 6. Roasting the Boneless Leg of Lamb

Remove the lamb from the refrigerator at least 1 hour before cooking it.

Preheat the oven to 450 F. degrees.

(450° F = 230° C = gas mark 9)

Snip the corner of the bag and squeeze the marinade out into the sink. It will no longer be usable.



Pat the lamb dry with paper towels.



Put 2 teaspoons of salt and 3/4 teaspoons of freshly ground pepper into a dish. Season the entire lamb with the salt and pepper. (You

put the salt and pepper into a separate dish first for sanitary reasons. You would not want to be going back and forth between touching the raw lamb and your main salt and pepper holders.)



Place the lamb on a roasting rack in a roasting pan.



Insert an oven-safe meat thermometer into the thickest part of the boneless leg of lamb.

(I strongly recommend using an [oven-proof meat thermometer](#) for roasting a leg of lamb. This should allow you to peek through the window of your oven door without opening the door and changing the internal temperature of the oven. Every time you open the oven door, it takes a good ten minutes for the temperature to get back to its original setting)



Set the lamb into the 450-degree oven and roast for 20 minutes.
(450° F = 230° C = gas mark 9)



After the 20 minutes, lower the temperature to 325° Fdegrees (325° F = 165° C = gas mark 3-very moderate) and continue cooking the lamb until the internal temperature is to your liking. Approximate Roasting Time for a 5-7 pound Boneless Leg of Lamb: (Source: [United State Department of Agriculture](http://www.ams.usda.gov))

Lamb Leg, boneless, rolled: Roast 325° (165° C)	APPROXIMATE Roasting Time	Internal Temperature
Rare	20 to 25 min./lb	135 F. (57.2 C)
Medium-rare	25 to 30 min./lb	145 F. (62.8 C)
Medium (to medium well)	30 to 35min./lb.	160 F (72.0 C)
Well done*	35 to 40 min./lb	170 F (77.0 C.)

*Most people avoid cooking lamb to "well done". It will be tough and dry.

There are several factors that will affect the cooking time:

The shape of the roast

The internal temperature when you first put it in the oven

Bone-in roast will require extra cooking time

Fluctuations in temperature of your own oven.

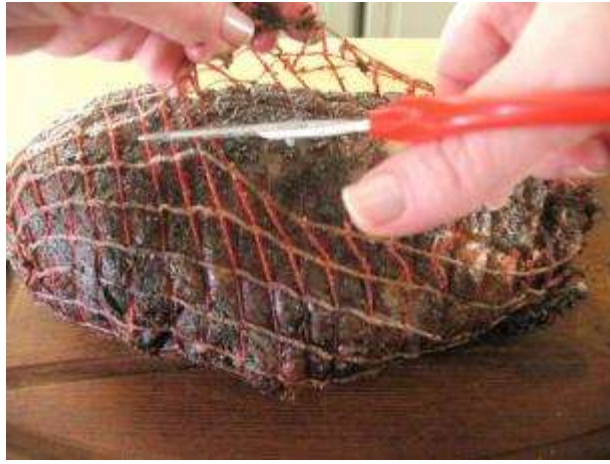
My 5 pound Leg of Lamb was removed from the oven when the internal temperature of the Lamb reached 140 F. degrees - medium rare.

It took a total of 1 and 1/2 hours to cook, which was considerably less time than what the USDA guidelines had recommended.

This is why a meat thermometer is absolutely essential when you are cooking a roast.

When the meat is cooked, remove it from the oven and let it rest for 10 minutes. The temperature will increase by about 5 degrees while the roast is resting out of the oven.

With a pair of kitchen scissors cut through the netting (or string)....



....and remove it completely.



Slice the lamb into 1/2 inch thick slices across the grain. ([Here](#) and [here](#) are very some very good pictures that show how to carve a bone-in Leg of Lamb.)

I [roasted](#) some carrots and small red potatoes separately....



....and served them with this Boneless Leg of Lamb.



Enjoy!

Approximate Lamb Cooking Times:

Source: USDA Last modified - May 2007

Cut of Lamb	Size	Cooking Method	Cooking Time	Internal Temperature (Fahrenheit / Celsius-Centigrade))
Lamb Leg, bone in	5 to 7 lbs.	Roast 325° (165° C)	20 to 25 min./lb.	Medium rare 145°F / 43.5°C
			25 to 30 min./lb.	Medium 160°F / 56.9°C
			30 to 35 min./lb.	Well done 170°F / 62.4°C
	7 to 9 lbs.	Roast 325°	15 to 20 min./lb.	Medium rare 145°F / 43.5°C
			20 to 25 min./lb.	Medium 160°F / 56.9°C
			25 to 30 min./lb.	Well done 170°F / 62.4°C
Lamb Leg, boneless, rolled	4 to 7 lbs.	Roast 325°	25 to 30 min./lb.	Medium rare 145°F / 43.5°C
			30 to 35 min./lb.	Medium 160°F / 56.9°C
			35 to 40 min./lb.	Well done 170°F / 62.4°C
Shoulder Roast or Shank	3 to	Roast	30 to	Medium rare

Leg Half	4 lbs.	325°	35 min./lb.	145°F / 43.5°C
			40 to 45 min./lb.	Medium 160°F / 56.9°C
			45 to 50 min./lb.	Well done 170°F / 62.4°C
Cubes, for Kabobs	1 to 1½"	Broil/Grill	8 to 12 minutes	Medium 160°F / 56.9°C
Ground Lamb Patties	2" thick	Broil/Grill	5 to 8 minutes	Medium ° 160°F / 56.9°C
Chops, Rib, or Loin	1 to 1½" thick	Broil/Grill	7 to 11 minutes	Medium rare 145°F / 43.5°C
			15 to 19 minutes	Medium 160°F / 56.9°C
Leg Steaks	¾" thick	Broil/Grill 4" from heat	14 to 18 minutes	Medium rare 145°F / 43.5°C Medium 160°F / 56.9°C
Stew Meat, pieces	1 to 1½"	Cover with liquid; simmer	1½ to 2 hours	Medium 160°F / 56.9°C
Shanks	¾" to 1 lb.			
Breast, Rolled	1½ to 2 lb.	*Braise 325°	1½ to 2 hours	Medium 160°F / 56.9°C

*Braising is roasting or simmering less-tender meats with a small amount of liquid in a tightly covered pan.