



LA RICETTA. From Abruzzo Lamb Ragu with Pasta alla Chitarra

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Raising sheeph as always been one of the Abruzzo's primary occupations so it is not surprising that both the meat and cheese they produce play an important role in the region's hearty and rustic cooking.

Lamb is a key ingredient in Abruzzo's signature ragu, simmered with wine, sweet bell peppers and the region's beloved peperoncino, red chile peppers. The thick ragu is typically served with pasta alla chitarra, homemade spaghetti made on a guitar like wooden instrument that cuts the pasta sheets into perfect square shaped strands.

Made with semolina, the thick strands remain chewy and are a perfect companion to the flavorful



sauce. A generous sprinkle of Pecorino Romano completes the dish.

In a large skillet, cook the oil, onion, bell pepper, and peperoncino until the vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute more. Stir in the lamb and cook, stirring frequently to break up any lumps, until it is no longer pink about 15 minutes. Add the wine and simmer until it evaporates. Stir in the tomatoes. Add the bay leaf, and salt.

Bring the sauce to a simmer and reduce the heat to low. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is thickened, about 1 1/2 hours. Bring at least 4 quarts of water to a boil. Add the spaghetti and cook stirring frequently until the pasta is tender. Meanwhile, remove the bay leaf from the sauce. Spoon a thin layer into a large heated serving bowl. Drain the pasta and place it in the bowl. Top with the remaining sauce and cheese and toss well. Serve hot.

Serves 6 to 8:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil n 1 medium onion, finely chopped;
- 2 large red bell peppers, seeded and chopped;
- 1 small dried peperoncino, to taste;
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped n 1 pound lean ground lamb;
- 1/2 cup drY red wine n 1 (28- to 35-ounce) can italian tomatoes with their juice, chopped;
- 1 bay leaf n salt to taste;
- 1 pound pasta alla chitarra or thick spaghetti n 1/2 cup freshly grated pecorino romano.

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