



MEDITERRANEAN · SPANISH-BASQUE · MAIN · LARGE-FORMAT PROTEIN · SIGNATURE

Whole Leg of Lamb — Sous Vide → Kamado

Boneless leg butterflied, vacuum-sealed with rosemary and garlic, 57 °C for 10 hours. Then live fire: screaming kamado, 3 minutes per side. Medium-rare edge-to-edge, a crust you can hear break, and lamb flavor that fills the backyard.

Protein Lamb — Leg (boneless, butterflied)

Serves 8-10 (2.5 kg leg yields ~1.8 kg cooked meat)

Difficulty Intermediate

Active 25 min (trim + seal + sear + carve)

Total 10 h SV + 40 min kamado setup + 8 min sear + 15 min rest ≈ 11 h 10 min

THE STORY

Precision Meets Fire

There is no better argument for the sous vide + kamado workflow than a whole leg of lamb. The leg is a beautiful problem: a 2.5-kilogram cut with two muscles that cook at different rates, a thick end that wants more time, a thin end that wants less, and a surface that needs *char* — the dark, bitter-sweet, almost-burnt edge that is the soul of lamb eaten outside. Cook it on the kamado alone and you chase the crust while the interior goes gray at the edges and raw at the center. Cook it sous vide alone and you get a perfectly pink, perfectly tender, perfectly *boring* slab that tastes like it's been poached.

The solution is not a compromise. It is a sequence. The sous vide sets the interior — 57 °C for 10 hours, which is enough time for the enzymes to soften the connective tissue in the leg's worked muscles without letting it go above medium-rare. Then the kamado, at its hottest — coals glowing white, grate dusted in ash — sears the exterior in three minutes per side. The

interior, already at target, does not move. The exterior picks up smoke, Maillard, and the most important flavor on grilled lamb: *char bitterness balanced by rendered fat*. This is the backyard version of what a Basque asador does with a leg over oak embers for two hours. The technique is different; the result is the same.

Butterflied is the move. Bone-in is traditional and beautiful but the bone adds thermal mass that slows the SV phase and complicates the sear. Butterflying — opening the leg flat, so the thickness is roughly uniform at 35–45 mm — solves both problems and produces a piece of meat that can be carved across the grain into perfect slices. The bone becomes stock; the meat becomes dinner.

AT A GLANCE

Specs

CUT Leg, boneless, butterflied	WEIGHT 2.5 kg trimmed (serves 8–10)	SV 57 °C / 10 h	KAMADO SEAR 300 °C+ direct • 3 min per side
DIFFICULTY Intermediate ●●●○○	ACTIVE TIME 25 min total	TOTAL TIME ~11 h 10 min	TARGET INTERNAL 55 °C at serve (medium-rare)
MAKE-AHEAD SV can hold at 55 °C up to 4 h before sear	CARVE Across the grain, 5–6 mm slices		

UMAMI ADAPTATION

What Changed & Why

The classical Basque asador roasts a whole bone-in leg over oak embers for 90–120 minutes, basting with rendered fat. It is one of the great meat preparations in the world — and it demands a fire pit, the right wood, and a cook who can read embers. The adaptation achieves

the same end state — medium-rare interior, deeply charred and smoky exterior — using the two instruments Pablo already owns. The ● tier upgrades the lamb itself (American heritage breeds raised on alfalfa are the closest US equivalent to the great European lambs) and adds a mother-tare-style baste for the final sear.

CHANGE	ORIGINAL	UMAMI VERSION	WHY
TECH	2-hour bone-in kamado roast over embers	SV 57 °C / 10 h butterflied, then 6-min kamado sear	Separates interior control (SV) from exterior control (fire). Neither phase compromises the other. Same result, lower execution risk.
ADD	Salt + pepper on the kamado only	Dry rub 12 h before sealing — salt + pepper + rosemary + garlic	Salt penetrates deeply overnight (dry brine). 12 h is the sweet spot: enough for penetration, not long enough to cure the surface.
ELEV	Single baste during sear	Rosemary-oil baste at flip + crucial resting phase with foil tent	Baste adds herb perfume to the sear surface. Rest allows surface temp to equalize with interior (10 °C swing drops to 2 °C).
SUB	Garlic, rosemary, EVOO	● supermarket garlic + ● grocery rosemary · ● Las Pedroñeras purple garlic, fresh rosemary branches on the embers, preserved lemon in the rub	The ● tier upgrades the components that touch the meat most directly — garlic (flavor), rosemary (aroma on embers), lemon (acid cut).

What You Need

● Everyday

The Lamb

- 1 × 2.5 kg **boneless leg of lamb, butterflied** — from Whole Foods or a good grocery butcher counter. Ask them to butterfly and remove the silverskin and hard fat; leave a thin cap of soft fat.
- *Trimmed weight target: 2.3–2.5 kg after trim. Reserve trimmings + bone for stock.*

The Dry Rub (T-12 h)

- 25 g kosher salt ($\approx 1\%$ of meat weight — the dry brine ratio)
- 8 g freshly cracked black pepper
- 4 cloves garlic, microplaned
- 2 tbsp fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp EVOO

The Sear Baste

- 60 ml EVOO
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary (for the baste brush — also use as embers topper)
- 2 cloves garlic, lightly crushed

To Finish

- Flaky sea salt (Maldon or equivalent)
- Lemon wedges
- Optional: mint-parsley salsa verde or mojo verde on the side (see Sauces & Condiments §Mojo Verde)

Substitution Notes

- *Can't butterfly?* A bone-in leg works with SV 57 °C / 14 h (longer to account for bone thermal mass). Sear is the same; carving is harder (around the bone).
- *No fresh rosemary?* 2 tsp dried rosemary in the rub is acceptable; skip the baste step — dried rosemary scorches. Use thyme branches instead.
- *No kamado?* Cast iron over the hottest burner + blowtorch combo works for the sear. Miss the smoke element but keep the crust. Reference: Cross-Technique Workflows §SV → Fire Finish.

No Limits

The Lamb — Heritage Breed

- **1 × 2.5 kg boneless leg of lamb from Elysian Fields (purebredlamb.com)** — American heritage breed raised on alfalfa, closest US equivalent to top European lamb. Ships overnight. Pablo has ordered from them ✓.
- Alternatives (all verified): **Border Springs Farm** (heritage breeds, chef favorite), **Shepherd Song Farm** (grass-fed, whole/half lamb option, custom cuts), **D'Artagnan** (heritage lamb, overnight)
- Spec the butcher: boneless, butterflied, silverskin removed, soft fat cap preserved, bone reserved separately for stock.

The Dry Rub — Spanish Pantry

- 25 g Maldon (Pablo has ✓)
- 8 g Tellicherry or Kampot black pepper, coarse-cracked
- 4 cloves **Las Pedroñeras purple garlic** (nuttier, less sharp — via La Tienda or Despaña online)
- 2 tbsp fresh rosemary from a single branch
- **1 tbsp preserved lemon, finely minced** — skin + flesh (see Sauces & Condiments §Preserved Lemons)
- 2 tbsp **Arbequina EVOO** (Pablo has ✓)

The Sear Baste

- 60 ml Arbequina EVOO
- 4–6 sprigs fresh rosemary (half for baste, half thrown directly on embers during sear for aromatic smoke)
- 3 cloves Las Pedroñeras garlic, smashed

Infrastructure

- **Sous vide circulator** (Pablo ✓) with large container capable of holding a 2.5 kg butterflied leg submerged
- **Chamber vacuum sealer or FoodSaver + large bags** (Pablo ✓)
- **Kamado with oak or cherry wood chunks** for the sear phase (not essential — lump alone works — but the smoke is what lifts the dish from 'good' to 'the backyard went quiet'). Reference: Fire and Smoke §Wood Selection.
- **Instant-read probe thermometer** (Thermopen or equivalent) — verify 55 °C internal before plating.

EQUIPMENT

Your Kit

- Sous vide circulator + large container (or stock pot with lid cut for circulator)

- Vacuum sealer + heavy-duty bag (large enough for butterflied leg flat-packed)

- Kamado + lump charcoal + oak/cherry wood chunks (optional, highly recommended)

- Long tongs

- Instant-read probe thermometer

- Large cutting board (grooved — will collect significant juice)

- Sharp carving knife (30+ cm slicer is ideal)

- Foil (for rest tent)

- Basting brush

MISE EN PLACE

Before You Start

- T-12 h (night before SV): Trim lamb. Apply dry rub. Cover loosely (on a rack, uncovered, in fridge is ideal — surface dries for better sear). Return to fridge.

 - T-10 h 30 min: Pull lamb from fridge. Vacuum-seal with any remaining rub residue. Submerge in 57 °C SV bath. Set timer: 10 h.

 - T-1 h: Light kamado, bottom vent 50% open, top vent 25% open. Target 300 °C+. This takes 30–40 min to stabilize.

 - T-20 min: Remove lamb from SV bath. Cut bag open over a bowl (save all the liquid — it's a pan-sauce gold mine). Pat meat dry with paper towels. Critical — surface moisture kills sear.

 - T-10 min: Dust lamb very lightly with salt (the rub salt has already penetrated; this is surface-layer crunch).

 - T-5 min: Mix baste: 60 ml EVOO + smashed garlic + rosemary. Heat briefly in a pan (60 °C — just warm, not cooking) to infuse.
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- T=0 (sear phase): Kamado at 300 °C+. Toss oak/cherry chunks on the embers. Sear lamb (see method).

MAKE-AHEAD

Timeline

- T-12 h – Trim + dry brine**
Trim silverskin. Microplane garlic + chop rosemary + mix with salt/pepper/EVOO. Rub all surfaces. Rack in fridge, uncovered.
- T-10 h 30 min – Seal + SV start**
Vacuum-seal lamb flat. Submerge in 57 °C bath. Walk away for 10 hours.
- T-1 h – Light kamado**
Lump charcoal pyramid. Bottom vent 50% / top vent 25%. Let coals ash over and dome hit 300 °C+.
- T-20 min – Remove SV, pat dry**
Cut bag over bowl. Save liquid (stock/pan sauce). Pat meat rigorously dry — 3 passes with paper towels. Moisture = no crust.
- T-5 min – Warm baste + wood on embers**
Warm EVOO + garlic + rosemary. Toss 2–3 wood chunks on the embers (oak for classic, cherry for subtle fruit).
- T=0 – Sear fat side first**
Lamb fat-cap side DOWN on the grate. 3 min, lid open (direct fire). Baste the up-facing side 3× during this phase.
- T+3 min – Flip**
Flip. Meat-side down. 3 min more. Baste the fat side. The rosemary sprigs on the embers are perfuming the smoke.
- T+6 min – Probe check**
Target 55 °C internal at the thickest point. If 53–55 °C: pull. If <53 °C: 30 more seconds and re-probe. NEVER exceed 58 °C — past medium-rare the lamb goes from great to ordinary.

● **T+7 min – Rest under foil tent**

Transfer to grooved board. Tent loosely with foil. Rest 12–15 min. Internal will hold or rise 1–2 °C; surface equalizes; juices redistribute.

● **T+22 min – Carve + serve**

Remove foil. Carve ACROSS the grain (muscle fibers run roughly the long axis of the leg) in 5–6 mm slices. Shingle on a warmed platter. Flaky salt + lemon wedges + bowls of mojo verde on the side.

METHOD

The Cook

1 Dry Brine (T-12 h)

1. Lay the butterflied leg flat on a sheet pan. Inspect: any silverskin should be removed (it doesn't render and leaves a chewy seam), but leave the soft fat cap — it bastes the meat during SV and crisps on the kamado.
2. Mix the rub: 25 g salt + 8 g pepper + microplaned garlic + chopped rosemary + 2 tbsp EVOO. The EVOO binds the dry ingredients to the meat.
3. Rub every surface of the leg — both sides, into the creases of the butterfly, edges. Press, don't smear.
4. Place the lamb on a rack over a sheet pan. Leave it uncovered in the fridge for 12 hours. This dry-ages the surface: moisture wicks away, salt penetrates, and the exterior gets that slightly tacky skin that sears beautifully.
5. **Do NOT skip the uncovered rack step.** A wet surface on a kamado = steam = no crust. This 12 h is mandatory infrastructure.

WHY THIS WORKS

Salt at 1% of meat weight is the gold-standard dry brine ratio. Over 12 h, salt diffuses deeper than the surface mm — it travels into the muscle fibers, breaks down myosin proteins, and allows the fibers to retain more moisture during cooking. This is why dry-brined meat loses less juice than unsalted meat even at the same internal temperature. The uncovered drying step does something separate: it removes surface moisture so the kamado sear proceeds from 'dry exterior → Maillard' instead of 'wet exterior → steam first, Maillard eventually'. Reference: Protein Encyclopedia §Lamb; Food Science Core §Dry Brining; Stovetop and Pan §Sear Theory.

2 Vacuum Seal + SV 10 h

1. Remove lamb from the rack. Any dry rub residue on the sheet pan: scrape up and include in the bag.
2. Vacuum-seal the lamb in a single large heavy-duty bag, flat-packed — the butterflied shape means it should lay flat at ~40 mm thickness.
3. Submerge in a 57 °C sous vide bath. Ensure the bag is fully below the water line — a plate or metal rack on top prevents floating.
4. Set timer for **10 hours**. This is long enough for the enzymes in the leg's worked muscles (quadriceps, biceps femoris) to soften the connective tissue without the meat going past medium-rare. Walk away.
5. **Timing flexibility:** 8–12 h is the tolerance window. If the dinner timing moves, the lamb holds at 55–57 °C for up to 4 h past the 10 h mark without quality loss. It does NOT hold after 14 h — the texture shifts from tender to mushy as collagen fully dissolves.

WHY THIS WORKS

At 57 °C, three things happen simultaneously: (1) proteins denature and the meat goes from raw to cooked in texture, (2) myosin's water-holding capacity drops, squeezing some juice out — this is normal and expected, (3) natural enzymes (cathepsins) work slowly on connective tissue, transforming it from tough to tender without the full collagen-to-gelatin conversion that happens at higher temps (65 °C+). The result is meat that is both pink and tender — a combination the stovetop cannot produce on a cut this size. Reference: [Sous Vide Mastery §Heat Penetration](#); [Sous Vide Mastery §Tough Cut Paths](#); [Protein Encyclopedia §Lamb](#); [Food Science Core §Protein Denaturation](#).

3 Light + Stabilize Kamado

1. One hour before sear time, light the kamado.
2. Method: lump charcoal pyramid. Light 2–3 fire starters in the middle of the pile. Lid open, bottom vent 50%, top vent off.
3. Once flames are established (5–8 min): close lid. Bottom vent 50%, top vent 25%.
4. Let the kamado climb to **300 °C+ dome temperature**. This takes 30–40 min. Don't rush — a rushed kamado has uneven heat and live flame instead of glowing coals.
5. When ready: the coals should be glowing white–orange beneath a thin ash layer, flames should be minimal (coals not flames), and the grate should be unstoppable–hot when you hover a hand over it.
6. **Just before the lamb goes on:** toss 2–3 oak or cherry wood chunks on the embers. They'll smolder and smoke during the sear. *Do not soak the chunks* — steam from wet wood produces acrid white smoke. Reference: Fire and Smoke §Wood Chunks.

WHY THIS WORKS

The kamado's ceramic thermal mass means temperature stability once equilibrated. 300 °C+ is above the 140 °C Maillard threshold by a wide margin, which means surface browning starts instantly on contact. Live flames are actually counterproductive — they deposit soot and create hot-spots. What you want is radiant heat from glowing coals and gentle smoke from wood that's smoldering but not combusting. Reference: Kamado Mastery §Temperature Control; Fire and Smoke §Coal State.

4 The Sear (6 min total)

1. Remove the lamb from the SV bath. Cut the bag over a bowl — **save the liquid**. It's concentrated lamb-bag jus. Use for pan sauce (reduce + mount with butter) or freeze in cubes for future braises.
2. **Pat the lamb aggressively dry**. 3 passes with paper towels, both sides. Any remaining moisture will steam during the sear and prevent Maillard. This is the key common failure point.
3. Dust lightly with salt on both sides (a pinch per side — the rub salt is already in the meat; this is surface crunch only).
4. Place the lamb on the grate **fat-cap side DOWN**. Lid up. Do not move it.
5. 3 minutes. During this time: baste the up-facing side 3 times with the warm EVOO-garlic-rosemary oil.
6. At 3 min: flip with long tongs. Meat-side down. 3 minutes more. Baste the now-up fat side.
7. At 6 min: probe the thickest point. Target **55 °C internal**. If 53–55 °C: pull NOW. If <53 °C: 30–60 sec more and re-probe.
8. **Never exceed 58 °C**. Past this point, the SV magic — edge-to-edge medium-rare — is lost.

WHY THIS WORKS

The 6-minute kamado sear is the mirror image of the 10-hour SV: high heat, short time, surface only. The interior is already at ~57 °C when the lamb hits the grate; 6 minutes of 300 °C+ surface contact drives the crust without meaningfully raising the interior (heat conduction from surface to core on a 40mm butterflied cut is slow — roughly 2 °C per minute). The baste does two things: it adds herb aromatics to the sear surface (rosemary oil's carnosic acid is heat-tolerant and aromatic), and it replaces any surface moisture lost to evaporation, preventing the crust from over-drying. Reference: Cross-Technique Workflows §SV → Fire Finish; Stovetop and Pan §Maillard Science; Sauces and Condiments §Aromatic Infusions.

5 Rest + Carve

1. Transfer the lamb to a grooved cutting board. The grooves matter — a resting leg releases significant juice.
2. Tent loosely with foil. Not sealed — *tented*. A sealed foil wrap steams the crust you just worked for 11 hours to build.
3. **Rest 12–15 minutes.** This is not optional. The surface is at ~200 °C; the interior is at 55 °C; without rest, the first cut will release a flood of juice because the exterior is still driving heat inward.
4. At the 12–15 min mark: internal temp has equalized to 55–57 °C throughout, and the juices have redistributed into the muscle fibers instead of pooling.
5. Carve across the grain. The butterflied leg's muscle fibers run roughly parallel to its long axis — cut perpendicular to that direction.
6. 5–6 mm slices. Thicker slices overwhelm the plate with lamb; thinner slices tear.
7. Shingle on a warmed platter. Drizzle with any juice from the board. Flaky salt over the top. Lemon wedges around the edge. Sauces in separate bowls, not on the meat.

WHY THIS WORKS

Resting solves a physics problem: the outermost 5 mm of the lamb is at 200 °C+ after the sear, while the center is at 55 °C. Heat flows from hot to cold. Without rest, the surface continues to drive heat inward during carving — this is why a sliced-too-early roast shows a gradient from gray (outer band) to pink (center). Resting equalizes this gradient. Separately: during cooking, muscle fibers contract and squeeze juice toward the center. Resting allows the fibers to relax and reabsorb that juice — cut too early and the juice pours out onto the board instead. Reference: Food Science Core §Resting; Protein Encyclopedia §Carving Technique; Knife Skills §Across-the-Grain.

QUICK REFERENCE

Timing Cheat Sheet

STEP	TIME	CUE
Trim + dry rub + rack in fridge	T-12 h · 10 min active	Surface lightly tacky after 12 h — not wet, not crusty
Vacuum-seal + SV start	T-10 h 30 min · 5 min active	57 °C bath, bag fully submerged

STEP	TIME	CUE
Light kamado	T-1 h · 5 min active	Target 300 °C+ dome, glowing coals
Pull SV + pat dry + wood on embers	T-20 min · 5 min active	Aggressively dry — 3 passes paper towels
Sear fat-side down	T=0 · 3 min	Baste 3× during this phase
Flip + sear meat-side	T+3 · 3 min	Baste fat-side 2–3×
Probe + pull at 55 °C	T+6 · 30 sec	Never exceed 58 °C internal
Rest under foil tent	T+7 · 12–15 min	Foil loose, not sealed
Carve across grain + plate	T+22 · 5 min	5–6 mm slices, shingled on warm platter

TROUBLESHOOTING

Emergency Protocols

INTERNAL TEMP READS 60 °C+ WHEN YOU PROBE AT T+6 MIN

The lamb is at medium, not medium-rare. Not a disaster — still great lamb, just past the peak window. Pull immediately (do not sear further). Rest for 10 min (not 15 — less carryover needed). Carve thinner (4 mm) to minimize the perception of firmness. For next batch: drop SV temp to 55 °C and pull at 53 °C internal after sear.

NO CRUST FORMS AFTER 3 MINUTES ON THE FIRST SIDE

Either the kamado is under-temperature (below ~260 °C) or the lamb was wet. Do not flip. Leave it for another 60 sec and probe the dome: if <280 °C, open the bottom vent to 75% and wait for it to climb. If the meat is still wet, flip, pat the exposed side with a fresh paper towel, and continue. Next batch: dry more aggressively and verify kamado temp with an IR thermometer.

 **LAMB TASTES GAMEY OR OVERLY 'BARNYARD'**


This is a lamb-source problem, not a cook problem. Commodity grocery lamb can carry stronger flavor from feed. Fixes: (1) dry brine longer (18–24 h instead of 12) — the salt mellows strong flavors. (2) Serve with a brighter sauce — mojo verde or mint-parsley salsa verde cuts through the gameyness. (3) Upgrade the source — heritage breeds from Elysian Fields or Border Springs have cleaner, more refined flavor. For this cook: bring lemon to the table and instruct guests to hit their slice with a squeeze.

 **THE LEG HAS AREAS THAT ARE VISIBLY DIFFERENT THICKNESSES EVEN AFTER BUTTERFLYING**

This is normal — butterflied legs are rarely perfectly uniform. The thicker areas will read correctly at 55 °C; the thinner areas may be 58 °C. Solution: carve the thinner parts first and plate them (they'll be medium — still good). Serve the thicker center cuts last — they'll be true medium-rare. This is a feature, not a bug, for guests with mixed preferences. Next time: ask the butcher to even out the thickness during butterflying.

 **JUICE POURING OUT WHEN CARVING**

You cut too early. The lamb needed more rest. Stop carving. Transfer uncut portions back to the foil tent for 5 more minutes. For the slices already cut: lay them flat on a warm plate; they'll reabsorb some juice from the plate. Collect the pooled juice on the board — it's flavor gold for a pan sauce or to drizzle over the slices.

 **THE KAMADO DROPPED BELOW 250 °C MID-SEAR**

Flame died back. Open the lid briefly (gets oxygen in), open the bottom vent to 100% for 30 sec, close the lid, re-check. If still cold: the coals are spent. Transfer the lamb to a screaming cast iron on the stovetop to finish the sear — you lose the smoke element but save the crust. Next cook: start with more coals and verify stable 300 °C+ for 10 min before the lamb hits the grate.

Technique Notes

● Sous Vide + Fire — The Decoupled Method

CROSS-TECHNIQUE WORKFLOW · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL THICK PROTEIN CUTS

The SV → fire workflow is Pablo's signature approach for one reason: it separates the two cooking problems that fight each other on the grill. Problem 1: getting the interior to the exact target temperature. Problem 2: getting the exterior to develop a crust. On direct fire alone, these goals conflict — the longer you sear for crust, the more the interior overcooks. Sous vide solves problem 1 with absolute precision (to within 0.5 °C), which frees the fire phase to focus entirely on problem 2. The result is a combination the classical methods cannot produce: a uniformly pink interior with a mahogany crust. This pattern works for every thick cut: steaks, duck breasts, pork chops, lamb leg, ribeye roasts. Timing: SV at 2–4 °C below your pull target, then fire sear until the interior hits target. The brief sear doesn't have time to raise the interior significantly. Reference: Cross-Technique Workflows §SV → Fire Finish; Sous Vide Mastery §The Fire Handoff.

● The Dry Brine Ratio — 1 % by Weight

TECHNIQUE SCIENCE · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL DRY-BRINED MEATS

For any meat being dry-brined, the ratio is 1 % of the meat weight in salt. A 2.5 kg leg wants 25 g salt. A 1 kg roast wants 10 g. This is the Goldilocks number: enough to penetrate deeply and drive seasoning through the whole muscle, not so much that the surface gets cured or overly salty. The salt does not sit on the surface; it travels inward over 12–24 hours, drawing moisture out initially (which then reabsorbs with dissolved salt carrying the seasoning with it), breaking down surface proteins into a tacky film that sears beautifully, and increasing the water-holding capacity of the muscle fibers. For cuts under 1 kg: 12 hours is sufficient. For cuts 1–3 kg: 12–24 h. For cuts over 3 kg (whole turkey, standing rib): 24–48 h. Reference: Protein Encyclopedia §Dry Brining; Food Science Core §Salt Penetration.

● **Across-the-Grain Carving — Where the Tenderness Lives**

KNIFE TECHNIQUE · UNIVERSAL · APPLIES TO ALL MUSCLE-FIBER MEATS

Muscle is bundles of long parallel fibers. Cut along the grain and every bite is a long stringy fiber you have to chew through. Cut across the grain and every bite is a cross-section of short fiber segments that fall apart on the tongue. This single technique can turn an overcooked cut into something edible and an undercooked cut into something tender. For the butterflied leg: the fibers run roughly the long axis of the original leg shape. Orient the lamb on the board so the fibers run side-to-side in front of you; slice top-to-bottom. 5–6 mm slices are the sweet spot: thicker and the slice is too much meat per bite; thinner and the slices tear. Sharp knife mandatory — a dull knife compresses rather than cutting and squeezes juice out. Reference: Knife Skills §Carving; Protein Encyclopedia §Carving Technique.

● **No Limits: Oak and Cherry Wood on the Embers (Extends Sear Phase)**

ADVANCED FIRE TECHNIQUE · EXTENDS KAMADO SEAR PHASE

Lamb responds beautifully to wood smoke in a way beef does not. The ideal wood for lamb is oak — assertive but not aggressive, slightly tannic, traditional in Basque and southern European lamb cookery. Cherry as a second option is subtler, slightly fruit-forward, and pairs with the lamb's natural sweetness. Avoid mesquite (too aggressive for a short sear) and hickory (dominates the meat — fine for 12 h smokes, wrong here for 6 minutes). Application: toss 2–3 chunks on the glowing embers just before the lamb hits the grate. The chunks should smolder, not ignite — if they catch fire, the smoke turns acrid. Never soak the chunks. Dry wood produces blue smoke (the right kind); wet wood produces white smoke (acrid). Reference: Fire and Smoke §Wood Selection; Kamado Mastery §Smoke Zones.

● No Limits: The Lamb-Bag Jus Pan Sauce (Extends Plate Phase)

ZERO-WASTE TECHNIQUE · EXTENDS SERVE PHASE

The liquid released into the SV bag during the 10 h cook is concentrated lamb stock — gelatin, salt, rendered fat, herb aromatics, all in one small volume. Do not pour it down the drain. Cut the bag over a bowl and capture the liquid (150–250 ml typical). Pour it into a saucepan. Add 100 ml red wine (Rioja or any Spanish red), reduce by half over medium heat. Off heat, mount with 60 g cold butter cubes, whisking continuously until emulsified. Finish with a squeeze of lemon and 1 tsp of the reserved baste. Result: a glossy, savory sauce that tastes exclusively of this cook — no stock, no demi, no store-bought base. Serve in a small bowl on the side so guests can self-dress. The sauce is in the top 1 % of what any restaurant can produce and it comes free with the cook. Reference: Sauces and Condiments §Pan Sauces; Sous Vide Mastery §Bag Juice Pipeline.

● No Limits: Preserved Lemon Gremolata (Substitutes Finishing Salt)

FLAVOR BRIDGE · SUBSTITUTES PLAIN FLAKE SALT

Instead of (or in addition to) flaky salt and lemon wedges at service, offer a preserved lemon gremolata as the finishing condiment. Mince together: the skin + flesh of 1 preserved lemon quarter, 2 tbsp flat-leaf parsley, 1 clove microplaned garlic, and 1 tbsp EVOO. The preserved lemon brings deep salted-citrus depth that fresh lemon cannot match — it's a condiment common in Moroccan lamb preparations and it bridges North African and Mediterranean traditions without being obvious. A spoonful per plated slice transforms the lamb from 'classic Mediterranean roast' to 'something guests haven't had before'. Preserved lemons are worth keeping in the fridge permanently — they last a year, and they improve the lamb, swordfish, chicken (when someone else is cooking it), and any braise they touch. Reference: Sauces and Condiments §Preserved Lemons; Curing and Preservation §Preserved Lemons.

PAIRING

What to Drink

Wine — Classic

Rioja Reserva or Ribera del Duero — 2018 vintage or similar

Tempranillo-based Spanish reds with some bottle age handle grilled lamb perfectly: the wine's tobacco and leather notes mirror the kamado char, the moderate tannin cuts the lamb fat, and the red-fruit backbone keeps the pairing lively. A chilled Rioja Crianza works in Miami heat if the bottle-aged Reserva isn't on hand.

Wine — Adventurous

Bierzo Mencía or northern Rhône Syrah

Mencía from Bierzo (Galicia, Spain) has the smoky, mineral, slightly peppery profile that a kamado lamb lives next to. Northern Rhône Syrah (Saint-Joseph, Crozes-Hermitage) is the Basque-country asador pairing — smoke meets smoke. Both sit at lower alcohol (13–13.5 %) than Rioja, which keeps the meal from getting heavy.

Digestif

Aged Spanish brandy (Cardenal Mendoza Solera Gran Reserva) or Pedro Ximénez sherry

A post-lamb pour. The brandy's oak and dried-fruit profile picks up where the wine left off. PX sherry is darker and sweeter — essentially raisin syrup — a small pour is dessert in a glass after rich lamb.

CONTEXT

Menu Ideas

Starter

Pa amb tomàquet (UMAMI-10 #3) + a plate of jamón ibérico + marcona almonds. Bread + tomato + cured pork is Spain's way of saying 'sit down, the meat is coming.' Prep: 5 min at service. Reference: UMAMI-10 #3 Pa amb Tomàquet.

First Plate (small)

Gazpacho andaluz (UMAMI-5 #1) in 150 ml glasses — cold, bright, acidic. Resets the palate before the heavy main. Made the morning of; served ice-cold. Reference: UMAMI-5 #1 Gazpacho TM6.

Main

This lamb. Carved on a warm platter, family-style. Preserved lemon gremolata in one bowl, mojo verde in another. Sides: kamado-roasted fingerlings (the kamado is already lit — drop potatoes after the lamb comes off, 200 °C indirect for 30 min) and a grilled escarole/radicchio salad with sherry vinegar dressing.

Cheese / Between Courses

Aged Manchego DOP + Idiazábal + membrillo (quince paste) + walnuts. A small plate, passed family-style. Gives the wine time and makes room for dessert. Skip if the night is already heavy.

Dessert

Torrija: day-old sourdough (UMAMI-10 #1 trim!) soaked in milk-cinnamon-honey, pan-fried in butter, dusted with sugar + cinnamon, served with PX sherry reduction. Classic Spanish bread pudding — uses the sourdough Pablo has always got going. Reference: UMAMI-10 §Bread Uses.

YOUR NOTES

Cook Log

Session Notes

Date: _____ · Serves: ____ · Rating: __ / 5

Use this space to record what you changed, what worked, and what you'd do differently next time. Your future self will thank you.

