



By Peggy Crum, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

We often think of lamb as a spring food. There's good reason for that. Most sheep breed just once per year, in the fall, making spring the season when fresh lamb is most abundant.

In the culinary world, the term lamb, in general, is used to refer to the meat of sheep. Technically, though, lamb is the meat of young sheep and mutton is the meat of older sheep. Lamb is as different from mutton as veal is from beef. The deep, strong flavor often associated with lamb is really more descriptive of mutton.

The gamey flavor comes from compounds in the animal fat. The amount of these compounds varies not only by age but also with feed. Pasture fed animals, particularly those grazed on alfalfa and clover, have increased levels of the flavorful compounds. Imported meat, typically from Australia and New Zealand, are pasture-fed for a far gamier flavor. Domestic sheep, those grown in the United States, often begin on grass and finish with grain. This practice accommodates the preference of most people who eat lamb seasonally. They prefer the tender and mild, even sweet, flavor of lamb.

Fresh lamb should be pink to pale red with veins or spots of fat running throughout the meat. Fat "marbling" helps the meat retain moisture when cooked. Ground lamb will keep in the refrigerator for just two days; chops or roasts will keep for 3 to 5 days. If you plan to freeze lamb, take extra precaution to protect it from freezer burn.

Traditional lamb recipes use long cooking techniques and bold flavors such as mint and rosemary along with vinegar and dried fruit. These ingredients complement the strong flavors of mutton. Lamb can easily be overcooked and overwhelmed by preparing it this way. Recipes developed with spices, herbs and sauces to compliment the delicately delicious flavor of lamb are your best bet.

RECIPE for health

MARCH 2013

featured food:

LAMB

Lamb Burger

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Makes 4 burgers.

- 1 pound ground lamb
- 3 Tablespoons minced shallot
- 2 Tablespoons minced jalapeno pepper (seeded and deveined)
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice
- Lemon zest from ¾ of a lemon
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

Place all ingredients in a bowl. Use your hand to mix ingredients together.

Form into four patties, about 4 ½ ounces each.

Place patties on a hot grill and cook for 2-3 minutes on each side. Be careful not to overcook. Serve with mint yogurt sauce.

Mint Yogurt Sauce

- 1/3 cup Greek yogurt
- 3 Tablespoons crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ teaspoon dried mint
- ¼ teaspoon dried cilantro
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a small bowl, mix sauce ingredients. Let stand for at least a ½ hour before serving.

Try **Lamb Burgers** for lunch at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips, Brody Square and Riverwalk Market at Owen on March 20.