

# Memory of Lamian

(excerpt from *The Silk Roads: Recipes from Baku to Beijing*)

SERVES 4-6

## Ingredients

- 325g (11½oz) mutton or lamb rump, cut into 3 × 3 × 1cm (1¼ × 1¼ × ½in) pieces
- 3 tbsp neutral oil (e.g. vegetable or rapeseed oil)
- ½ onion, cut into 3cm (1¼in) chunks
- 1 pepper (any colour you like), cut into 3cm (1¼) chunks
- 2 finger chillies (optional)
- 75g (2½oz) green beans (or Chinese long beans if you can find them), trimmed and cut into 5cm (2in) pieces
- 200g (7oz) tomatoes, cut into 1-3cm (½-1¼in) wedges
- 3 fat garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp cumin seeds, toasted
- 325g (11½oz) tomato passata
- 4 tbsp stock (preferably lamb, but use what you've got)

## For the marinade

- 1½ tsp ground Sichuan peppercorn
- 1 tsp fine sea salt
- ½ tsp ground white pepper
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp MSG (optional)
- ½ tsp cumin seeds, toasted
- 1 tbsp Shaoxing wine
- ½ tbsp sesame oil

## For the noodles

- 200g (7oz) plain flour
- 1 tsp fine white sea salt, plus extra for cooking
- olive oil

## Directions

1. Add your marinade ingredients to a medium mixing bowl, along with your meat. Stir to coat and set aside for 15-20 minutes.
2. Heat the oil in a wok (or a large sauté pan) over a medium-high heat, swirling the oil around to coat the base of the wok. When the oil shimmers, add the onion, pepper and chillies (if using). Tip in your bowl of marinated lamb. Stir to combine, then cook, stirring occasionally, for 2-3 minutes, or until your meat is not too pink on the outside. Now add the tomatoes, garlic, cumin, cumin seeds and green beans. Stir to mix and coat, and cook for 1 minute more.
3. Finally, add the tomato passata and stock. Stir to mix, and cook for 3 minutes, or until the sauce has reduced slightly. Turn off the heat and set aside while you make the noodles.
4. In a mixing bowl, using clean hands, mix together your flour, salt and 100ml (½ cup) water. Once the mixture comes together into a dough, knead it for 2 minutes. Still in the mixing bowl, form your dough into a small ball and either spritz or brush the dough ball with oil, coating it on all sides before covering the bowl with a tea towel and leaving it to rest for 15 minutes.
5. Remove your dough from its resting place and, on a clean unfloured work surface, use the heel of your hand to press the dough down into a circle 25-28cm (10-11in) in diameter. Now use your knuckles to punch the dough down even further, puckering its surface in the process. With a sharp knife, cut your dough circle into strips 2cm (¾in) wide.
6. Lightly oil a large platter, and your hands as well. Get ready to make some noodles.
7. Working with one dough strip at a time, roll it out into a long cylindrical noodle. Do this by either rolling the dough between the palms of your hands, or on your work surface, or a combination of the two. Leave each rolled-out noodle on your work surface until you have finished with all your dough strips and your kitchen looks like it's covered in long, skinny, noodley worms ... that are about to get even longer.
8. Bring a large, well-salted pot of water to the boil. Have it at the ready.
9. Re-oil your hands. Then, take the first of your rolled-out noodles and use your fingertips to further thin and length it, gently twisting and pulling the dough to do so, and loosely coiling the oiled noodle on to the oiled platter. Repeat with the rest.
10. Now stand up (if you've been sitting down). Grab one noodle coil. Hold an end in each hand. Gently move your hands further and further from one another until your arms are shoulder's width apart and a skinny noodle hangs between them.
11. Quickly smack that skinny noodle down on to the table/workspace in front of you, continuing to hold on to its ends with your two hands. Gently move your arms wider as you lift the noodle up from the table, pulling it ever thinner and longer as you do so. Repeat this a couple times. (Or not, because your noodle will likely break, because, like me, you are not a noodle master. It's still fun to try, though, and it's still going to taste great!)
12. Drop the noodle into the boiling water, quickly returning to smack and pull another noodle and repeat the process until you have a mass of fresh noodles boiling in your pot. Strega Nona would be proud of you; I certainly am.
13. The noodles will be ready in 2-3 minutes; use this time to reheat the lamb. Strain the noodles from the pot and top them with lamby, tomatoey goodness.