



5 Mistakes to Avoid When Cooking a Leg of Lamb

1. Not bringing the lamb to room temperature before cooking.

This is an important step and one that shouldn't be skipped. When cooking a leg of lamb, it should never go straight from a cool refrigerator into a hot oven. It will lengthen the cook time and can lead to an unevenly cooked piece of meat.

Follow this tip: Before the lamb hits the oven, be sure to give it ample time to come to room temperature. Not only does this essential step cut down the cook time, but it also ensures that the meat is evenly cooked.

2. Letting the meat marinate for too long.

Marinades can be great for building a deeper flavor and for tenderizing tough cuts of meat, but be wary of leaving the lamb in marinades containing lots of acid and salt. Those two ingredients can break down protein in tender lamb pretty quickly and destroy the integrity of the meat, making it mealy and mushy.

Follow this tip: Since leg of lamb is such a tender cut, it doesn't really need much marinating. Instead, opt for adding more flavor with garlic, spices, and fresh herbs. If you do use a marinade with your lamb, keep an eye on the clock and don't go over the recommended time in the recipe.

3. Skipping a meat thermometer and eyeballing doneness.

When cooked for too long, this tender cut can be quick to dry out. A deeply browned crust won't cut it for figuring out whether your lamb is finished. For that, you'll need something a bit more precise.

Follow this tip: For the best taste and texture, rely on an instant-read thermometer to be sure your lamb is cooked to perfection. Cook until the internal temperature is between 150°F and 158°F (about 25-30 minutes per pound), it will continue to cook with carry-over cooking, while resting.

4. Not resting the meat before slicing.

This is the part of the cooking process that requires real patience: Avoid slicing into the lamb as soon as it comes out of the oven. The juices need time to redistribute throughout the meat. Cut too soon and the juices will end up pooling on the cutting board, leaving you with a drier cut of meat.

Follow this tip: For a more tender and juicy piece of meat, allow the lamb to rest for at least 30 minutes after removing it from the oven. This is plenty of time for the meat's juices to redistribute throughout the cut, so they end up on your plate, and not on the cutting board.

5. Slicing the meat the wrong way.

You've just prepared a delicious piece of meat, so it would be a real shame to take a wrong turn by slicing it incorrectly. Avoid slicing the meat with the grain. This goes not just for a leg of lamb, but also for all cuts of meat. When meat is sliced with the grain, it often results in tougher, chewier pieces.

Follow this tip: The grain of the meat refers to the direction in which the muscle fibers run. Always slice lamb against the grain, cutting across the muscle fibers rather than with them. You'll be rewarded with juicy and tender piece of meat.