



Dave Wall, The Unruly Pig

Hogget Shepherd's Pie

What on earth is hogget ? This is a frequent question from customers eating at The Unruly Pig as it is a popular dish on our menu (we currently serve a hogget trio (rack, loin and shoulder with hispi cabbage, garlic and anchovy). Hogget is mature lamb that is not mutton. It is typically 12- 18 months old whereas mutton is two years old. So why buy hogget as a substitute to say a roast leg of lamb? Simple- whilst the hogget may be slightly less tender than lamb (it needs a sharper knife!) it's flavour is far superior. Hogget has more depth and maturity. Using a maths analogy: it is like tasting lamb to the power of two. In colour it is a deeper red than lamb (whilst mutton is much darker meat). Hogget tends not to be readily available in supermarkets, but it is something that can be sourced via a good butcher. It is worth the effort involved if only to compare it's difference with lamb.

So, maybe to state the obvious, however you like to cook you lamb can be equally applied to hogget in all its forms. Some tips however:

- You can cook a leg of hogget just like you would cook a leg of lamb. We stuff our legs of hogget (for a Sunday Roast) with lots of anchovy, rosemary and garlic and serve it with Boulangère potatoes. Boulangère potatoes are so easy and yet so yummy. Sweat onions and garlic with a few sprigs of thyme and rosemary on a low heat for five minutes until the onions are softened. Peel and thinly slice potatoes to say a thickness of half a centimeter and alternatively layer the dish with onion and then potato in turn, seasoning each layer. Roast the leg of hogget on a rack above the potatoes, so that the fat and cooking juices drip through onto the potatoes, lacing them with a whole lot of goodness!

- I love shepherd's pie - it is easily one of my favourite comfort dishes. Served with tender stem broccoli or whenever in season, fresh peas and there is little better in life. It lifts my spirits to come home to this classic from my childhood. At The Unruly Pig we have been serving hogget shepherd's pie on our set menu- to say it has been popular is an understatement. We use the same mix for our a la carte

dish to stuff inside cabbage (alongside rack, loin and bbq hispi cabbage with anchovy) as we do to put in shepherd's pie and you can easily make this at home using my recipe below to create a pie with a difference, instead of the usual minced lamb opting for hogget shoulder that has been slowly braised to bring a new layer of indulgence and richness to the humble dish. Once cooked and tender we pull the meat from the bone and then add anchovies and miso - both ingredients give a huge umami boost and really raise the depth of flavour to a different level. So if you come across hogget why not give it a go? Do not be intimidated - I guarantee that if you like lamb, you will love hogget!

Ingredients

- ½ a hogget shoulder or 1.5 kg of lamb shoulder
- 2 onions, 4 carrots, 2 sticks of celery
- 1 small head of garlic
- 5 bay leaves, 10 sprigs thyme, 3 sprigs rosemary
- 500ml white wine
- 3L brown chicken stock
- 1 small tin anchovies
- A tablespoon of blond miso paste

Preheat the oven to 220°C, season the shoulder with a little salt and a roast for 12 minutes until browned.

Meanwhile peel and roughly chop your vegetables. When the lamb comes out of the oven turn it down to the lowest setting, ideally around 90°C.

Brown the vegetables in a casserole dish using the fat from roasting the shoulder, then add the herbs and deglaze with the wine. Reduce the wine down until half its original volume, add the stock and bring to a simmer.

Return the shoulder to the casserole dish, ensuring it is fully submerged under the stock (use a sheet of parchment to help with this), cover and braise for around 3 hours until totally soft and offering no resistance when poked with a skewer- the meat should be coming away from the bone. Allow to relax in the stock for a further hour, then remove from the stock. Pull the meat away, stringing it and pulling it.

Discard the bones, pass the stock through a sieve and reduce until a quarter of its volume and becoming thicker and slightly sticky. At this stage whisk in the anchovies and the miso. The anchovies will break down once in the heat.

Add the shoulder meat and then turn the heat right down to a gentle simmer, stirring regularly. The stock will reduce and glaze to the meat.

For a shepherd's pie pop the mix back into a shallow casserole and top with mashed potato and parmesan then brown slowly under the grill- delicious!