



## Lamb Pilaf with Spinach

Olive oil  
1 lb. lean ground lamb  
Kosher salt  
fresh ground black pepper  
2 tsp. brown mustard seeds  
1 tsp. cumin seeds  
1 yellow onion, finely chopped  
1 green bell pepper, seeded, deribbed, finely chopped  
1 serrano pepper, seeded, deribbed, finely chopped  
1 bay leaf  
5 cloves minced garlic  
1 cup basmati rice  
2 tbs. unsalted butter  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup dry, unoaked white wine (e.g. Sauvignon Blanc)  
1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups chicken broth  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. cayenne pepper  
1 tsp. ground cumin  
4 Roma tomatoes, finely diced  
3 green onions, finely diced  
chopped cilantro for garnish  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup toasted pine nuts for garnish  
1 lb. baby spinach leaves

Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the lamb, season with salt and pepper, and quickly brown. Remove the lamb from the skillet and set aside. Discard any excess fat.

Add more oil to the skillet and heat. Add the mustard and cumin seeds about 1 minute before the adding the onion, bell pepper, serrano pepper and bay leaf. Saute until the onions start to go translucent. Add the garlic, butter, rice and more oil if needed. Saute for 2 minutes after the butter has completely melted.

Deglaze the skillet with the wine and cook until the wine is reduced to almost dry. Add the broth and return the lamb to the skillet. Add the cayenne and ground cumin, and salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer, reduce heat to low and cover tightly. Cook until rice is tender, around 20 minutes for white basmati rice, about 40 minutes for brown basmati rice. Remove from heat, and add in the tomatoes and green onions; let sit for 5 minutes.

To toast the pine nuts, spread them in a single layer in a shallow baking pan, put in the oven at 325 F for 5 minutes. Watch carefully to make sure they don't burn. Toaster ovens work great for this step. To serve, take a handful of the spinach leaves and put on the plate. Spoon the lamb pilaf over the spinach, and garnish with cilantro and toasted pine nuts. Serves 4.

This dish has some very nice aromas, strong flavors from the lamb and spiciness from the cumin, cayenne and serrano. A Zinfandel might be the first thought for drinking with this. But Hidden Creek's Merlots are really strong and structured. The Napa Valley Merlot matches well with this dish.