

Grilled Lamb Chops with Watermelon Salad

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Watermelon salads are a Greek classic, making them a perfect match for lamb, another Mediterranean favorite. Prepared with a simple combination of cubed watermelon, shredded fresh mint, a tangy cheese, and a light olive oil dressing, watermelon salads offer a lot of summertime appeal because they are bright and refreshing. Although crumbled feta cheese is the traditional choice, we opted for goat cheese to create a creamier, tangier counterpoint to the sweet-crisp watermelon. Marinating the lamb chops for 15 minutes in a sauce of lemon zest, lemon juice, fresh oregano, fresh mint, and minced garlic gives them great flavor. For another hit of freshness, we save half the sauce for drizzling over the meat just before serving. We keep the recipe moving by making the watermelon salad while the meat marinates. Lamb rib chops are small and cook through quickly, so be sure not to walk away from the grill after you have put them on to cook. You can substitute lamb loin chops for rib chops, if desired; note that they will take a few minutes longer to cook than the lamb rib chops.

Grilled Lamb Chops with Goat Cheese-Watermelon Salad SERVES 4

- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon grated zest and 2 tablespoons juice from 1 lemon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded fresh mint
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh oregano
- 2 garlic cloves, minced (see page 5)
- Salt and pepper
- 12 lamb rib chops (about 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ pounds)
- 3 cups watermelon cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes
- 1 cup crumbled goat cheese

1. Combine 4 tablespoons olive oil, lemon zest, lemon juice, half of mint, oregano, garlic, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper in bowl. Reserve half of sauce and toss remaining sauce with lamb chops in baking dish. Marinate for 15 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, combine watermelon, cheese, remaining mint, and remaining olive oil in bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

3. Grill lamb chops over hot fire until browned on both sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer chops to serving platter and drizzle with reserved sauce mixture. Serve chops with watermelon salad.



SMART SHOPPING GOAT CHEESE

We conducted a test kitchen tasting of three domestic and four readily-available imported fresh goat cheeses, and our tasters concluded that American producers have mastered the craft of making goat cheese. The clear favorite was Vermont Chèvre from the Vermont Butter & Cheese Co. It was creamy and tangy but not overpowering. Meanwhile, reviews of the imported cheeses were mixed. Tasters were enthusiastic about Le Biquet from Canada, but the French cheeses were, for the most part, described as gamy or muttony, with a chalky, spackle-like texture. A few adventurous tasters appreciated the assertive flavors of the imported cheeses, but the overall feeling was that the domestic cheeses were cleaner-tasting and more balanced.

