

ONE OF A KIND KAFTA

Recipe: Julie Ann Sageer, Lebanese Cuisine

Serves: 4-6 ♦ prep time: 10 minutes ♦ total time: 20 minutes

This famed Middle Eastern meat kabob is sure to be memorable with mouths watering for more and more with each juicy bite. It's a zesty combination of finely ground lamb, beef or a blend of the two that is combined with fresh parsley, onions and its signature spice being "all spice" that is simply succulent! Customarily Kafta is formed around skewers, lengthwise to resemble "kabobs" and char-grilled over an open flame. This mystifying meat mixture can also be formed into patties or balls but whichever you shape it, one thing remains the same, this kabob keeps on giving with flavor! Kafta is traditionally served with Toum (traditional garlic dipping sauce) or Tahini Sauce wrapped into a warm pita or along side a star salad!

- 2lbs. ground lamb, beef or combination of the two
- 1 small yellow onion (1/3 cup), finely diced
- 1/4 cup fresh flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- 1/2 tsp. ground pepper
- 1/2 tsp. all spice

preparation:

* fire up the grill!

TO MAKE KAFTA MIXTURE

1. First finely chop 1/4 cup fresh flat leaf (Italian) parsley and add to food processor.
2. Then finely dice 1 small yellow onion (1/3 cup), add to food processor and then finely chop together breaking down the ingredients even smaller.
3. Next add 2lbs. of your ground lamb, beef or combination of the two into the food processor with 1 1/2 tsp. sea salt, 1/2 tsp. ground pepper and 1/2 tsp. all spice and thoroughly blend together. Once you have incorporated all the ingredients remove from food processor and place into a large mixing bowl.
4. Begin to further mix the meat mixture together to ensure that the ingredients are evenly distributed throughout the meat. Is it ideal to do this by hand as you can "knead" the mixture really well this way. Once this is complete, you are now ready to form your Kafta Kebobs!

TO MAKE KAFTA KABOBS

1. First take about a 1/3 cup of the meat mixture and begin to form it around a grilling skewer (if your using wooden skewers, make sure to first soak them in water so they do not burn on the grill). You do this by starting with the meat mixture about 3/4 quarters of the way down the skewer and then working your way up towards the top or tip of the skewer. Once you have the desired Kabob shape, set aside and repeat the process for each until all of your Kafta Kabobs are ready for grilling.
- ~ An alternate way to make the Kafta Kabob is to form the meat mixture with your hands first into the desired Kabob lengthwise shape and then pierce the skewer through the Kabob. You may find this method to be easier to work with.

TO MAKE KAFTA KABOBS: CONTNUED

- ~ You may also form the meat mixture into additional desired shapes, as patties (like a hamburger) or small balls (like a meatball, to serve as an appetizer) and to be able to offer a variety of choices with your meal and for your guests to choose from.
2. Once you have all of your Kafta Kabobs formed you are now ready to grill them. Make sure that you have pre-fired your grill up and that it is hot and ready for grilling. Also it is recommended that you either lightly oil the actual grill before placing your meat on so the meat doesn't stick to the grill.
 3. Place the Kafta Kabobs vertically across the grill on a side that is medium heat, slowly grill them by turning them periodically throughout so that they are grilled evenly on all sides, this should take approximately 8-10 minutes. Make sure that you do not over-grill your Kabobs or burn them, you want them to retain as much of their natural juices as possible so that they are simply succulent!
 4. When Ready to Enjoy: Immediately remove the Kabobs from the grill and place in a warm pita bread (this will help to retain their natural juices and keep them warm for serving) and let them rest from approximately 5 minutes (as they will continue to cook). Serve in the wrapped in the warm pita bread with the Middle Eastern traditional dipping sauce known as "Toum" or with Tahini Sauce and can be eaten as a sandwich or along side a star salad!

tip time:

1. Make sure to well distribute the herbs and spices into the ground meat and completely blend together so they become one, this is key in creating the correct flavor.
2. You may also add a 1/2 tsp. of paprika and /or a 1/4 tsp. of cayenne for additional flavors.
3. For 6-8 servings, double the recipe.

T E N A C I O U S T O U M

Recipe: Julie Ann Sageer, Lebanese Cuisine

Serves: 4-6 ♦ prep time: 2 minutes ♦ total time: 10 minutes
(pronounced: like the English word "Tomb")

This traditional Lebanese garlic dipping sauce is a staple fixture at the dinner table as pita bread is. The word "toum" meaning Garlic in Lebanese guides the way as the main and key element in creating this signature sauce along with extra virgin olive oil, fresh lemon juice and sea salt. Simple, minimal and fresh ingredients are utilized however the "secret" to mastering this sauce is all in the timeless techniques that makes toum, toum! Lively in taste, full bodied in texture and undeniably delicious makes this sauce a sure keeper for many years to come..

- 1 Garlic Head, mashed
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- 2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 lemon, freshly squeezed

preparation:

Keynote: it is ideal & customary to use a "mortar & pestle."

1. First, peel 1 head of garlic and place peeled cloves in the mortar and with the pestle, begin to smash the garlic. Once you have the garlic somewhat smashed you can add in 1/2 tsp sea salt and continue to smash the garlic with the salt until you have the garlic well smashed with a creamy consistency, like a smooth paste.
2. Now we are ready to add in the extra virgin oil, start by gradually adding in a little at a time while stirring the oil in the garlic with the pestle. After you have added in about 1-2 tbsp. of the oil and it is well incorporated you can now slowly drizzle in about half of the remaining oil in a thin stream while continually stirring it in with the pestle. Once you have stirred in about 1/2 of the oil you can now slowly stir in the lemon juice again gradually, in a thin stream while continually stirring it in with the pestle. Then gradually stir in the remaining olive oil in the same fashion until you all of the olive oil is well incorporated. The result should be a creamy consistency. You are essentially creating an "emulsion" with the oil and lemon juice.
3. When Ready to Enjoy: This sauce is served ideally at room temperature. You may use as a dipping sauce or spread with pita bread and is most widely used and goes deliciously with meat & chicken dishes, such as lahem mishwee, kefta, roasted or grilled chicken and also a dipping sauce with greens, such as dandelions Swiss Chard and watercress dishes as well.

tip time:

1. It is essential that you do not add in the olive oil too fast or too much at one time.
2. It is key to keep on stirring the sauce with pestle as you add in the oil and lemon juice to ensure that you create a successful sauce.
3. It is ideal to use fresh garlic, fresh lemon juice and a good extra virgin olive oil for the most optimal taste and texture, quality of ingredients is key with this sauce.
4. A mortar & pestle is the way of tradition when preparing this sauce, however if you like you may also use a food processor to incorporate the oil and lemon juice.
5. For a milder toum use less garlic & lemon juice and for a stronger toum use more garlic.
6. For 6-8 servings double the recipe.