

Lamb Kebabs

Juicy cubes of marinated lamb are threaded onto metal skewers and interspersed with wedges of red onions and squares of tomatoes. The tantalising aroma of kebabs being grilled over a charcoal brazier evokes in me the magic of street food in Turkey. The succulent kebabs are wonderful sprinkled with an onion, parsley and sumac relish and wrapped in warm pita bread. These are simply superb for a casual lunch accompanied with a refreshing cabbage salad.

For the marinade:

1 medium onion
¾ tsp Turkish baharat spice mix
1 tsp paprika
½ tsp Turkish red pepper flakes
1 tsp sea salt
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves
2 tbsp olive oil
¼ cup red wine vinegar
1kg (2¼lb) boneless leg of lamb, cut into 2.5cm (1in) cubes
2 small red onions
2 ripe tomatoes

For basting:

1 tbsp olive oil

For serving:

10 pita breads
extra-virgin olive oil
onion, parsley and sumac relish (*see below*)
2–3 lemons, cut into wedges

You will need:

10 flat-bladed steel skewers

Make the marinade: Grate the onion coarsely into a strainer (sieve) set over a small bowl and let stand for 10 minutes. Press down with the back of a spoon to squeeze out the juice. Discard the onion. Combine the onion juice and remaining marinade ingredients in a large bowl.

Add the cubed lamb to the marinade, turning the pieces over so they are well coated. Cover and refrigerate for 2–3 hours.

Cut the onions into wedges and the tomatoes into 2.5cm (1in) squares.

Remove the lamb from the fridge and let the meat come to room temperature before grilling. Drain the marinade and thread 6–8 cubes of lamb onto each skewer, alternating with the pieces of onion and tomato, packing the meat and vegetables close together.

Preheat a barbecue or ridged cast-iron griddle pan until very hot.

Brush the kebabs with oil and cook for 4–5 minutes, turning frequently, until the lamb is nicely charred on the outside and still a little pink inside.

To serve: Slide the meat onto the pita breads. Sprinkle with onion-sumac relish and a squeeze of lemon juice. Roll the bread tightly around the kebabs or simply serve on a bed of vermicelli rice pilaf.

Stella's Hints:

- For tastier kebabs, string one or two pieces of lamb fat between the meat chunks or leave a little fat on the lamb cubes as this keeps the meat moist and succulent and drips off during cooking.
- You can substitute beef fillet for the lamb.

Onion, Parsley and Sumac Relish

2 medium red onions, peeled

1 tsp sea salt

2 tsp ground sumac

2 tsp Turkish red pepper flakes

1 cup roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley (*use leaves and tender stems*)

Cut the onions in half lengthways, and finely slice each into half-moon slices. Place the slices in a small bowl and rub the salt into them with your fingers to extract some of the juice, until they soften. Rinse the onion slices and squeeze between your palms to remove excess water. Mix the sumac, red pepper flakes and parsley with the onions, tossing well together.