

Lamb Skewers with Mint Raita

4 servings (8-10 skewers) : ~45 min plus chill time in the fridge : lamb recipe by Melissa Clark, raita recipe by Izzah Cheema

My recommendation is to prep the ground meat & the raita sauce the night before - then all you have to do is assemble the skewers, cook, & plate when it comes time for dinner.

Ingredients:

Skewers:

- 1 lb cold ground lamb (could also use beef if you don't like lamb)
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup finely minced or grated white onion
- 2 garlic cloves, finely grated
- 2 tblsp finely chopped fresh cilantro or parsley, plus more for garnish
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp ground sumac, plus more for serving
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp Urfa or Aleppo pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp ground cinnamon (optional)
- flaky sea salt, for serving

Raita:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cumin seeds
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cilantro leaves, loosely packed
- 3 tbsp mint leaves, loosely packed
- 1 slice Serrano pepper or small Thai green chili pepper, deseeded (choose how thick the slice is depending on how spicy you'd like)
- 1 small garlic clove
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp sea salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plain yogurt (I used greek)

Instructions:

Prep the ground meat:

- In a large mixing bowl, combine the lamb, onion, garlic, cilantro, cumin, sumac, salt, Urfa pepper, black pepper, & cinnamon, if using.
- With your hands, thoroughly knead & massage the meat to incorporate the ingredients, about 4 minutes*.
- Chill the mixture for at least 2 hours or up to overnight.

Prep the raita:

- Add the cilantro leaves, mint leaves, Serrano, garlic clove, ground cumin, salt, lemon juice, & 2 tbsp water into a (preferably small) blender.
- Blend, scraping down the spice grinder/blender as needed, until it reaches a fine consistency. If needed, add another tablespoon or two of water to make it easier to blend. It should become a runny paste, with the leaves no longer visible.
- In a small bowl, whisk the yogurt until smooth & no longer grainy. Stir in the crushed green paste. Taste & add salt or more lemon juice, if desired. For a thinner consistency, add ½-1 tbsp of water.
- Place in a sealable jar & refrigerate until using.

Make the skewers

- If you're using wood skewers, soak them in water for about 30 minutes before cooking.
- Wet your hands with cold water, then divide meat into 8-10 equal portions & mold each around a metal or (soaked) bamboo skewer.
- Transfer skewers to a large plate or baking sheet. You can grill them right away at this point, or cover & refrigerate them while preparing the grill (up to 4 hours).
- Heat the grill* to medium-high. When the grill is hot, lightly brush the grates with oil, & add the skewers.
- Cook, rotating them carefully every few minutes, until evenly browned & slightly charred in places, about 5 to 10 minutes.
- Transfer to a platter & let rest for a few minutes. Garnish with more herbs, sumac & flaky sea salt, & serve over raita.

Recipe notes:

- Breaking down the meat will create a sticky, cohesive mixture that results in a pleasing springy texture. You can also combine everything in an electric mixer with the paddle attachment, in which case it will take only about 2 minutes.
- I don't have a grill but basically did the same steps, just on my cast iron skillet in the kitchen.

What you learn from this recipe:

- I learned that I should invest in a grill to stop smoking out my kitchen.