

Turkish Lamb Meatballs in Warm Yoghurt Sauce



I am a HUGE fan of Turkish food. I love its simplicity and this divine recipe I found on the Internet by Janet Fletcher from a book called 'Yoghurt' was no exception. There are a few steps to this recipe but it is really quite simple and the end result made me think of a Turkish restaurant that I used to work in, 'The Ottoman' in Canberra, many moons ago. It was the real deal and their food was so good, it had a level of authenticity to it that made me fall in love with Turkish cuisine. I can't wait to cook more of this divine food so there will be more recipes like this in future, of that I am sure!

This dish was served with a Red Pepper Butter, however I didn't have access to the ingredients the recipe listed. I improvised and still think it was a gorgeous addition to the dish.....recipe also below.

Prep time: 30 Minutes
\$\$ Medium Budget

Cooking time: 40 Minutes

Serves 4

Olive oil for frying

500gm of lamb mince

1 egg lightly beaten

1/2 cup of breadcrumbs

1 brown onion, finely minced in a processor and any liquid drained

1 tsp of dried oregano

1 tsp of toasted cumin seeds, pounded in a mortar and pestle*

1 tsp of sea salt

Freshly ground pepper

2 tbs of chopped fresh parsley

1 cup of chicken stock

1/4 cup of toasted pine nuts and chopped dill for garnish

Brown rice & Quinoa blend to serve (optional, you can use any rice you like but this was the perfect combo)

Steamed greens or green salad leaves to serve

For the Yoghurt Sauce:

2 cups of greek yoghurt

1 large egg, lightly beaten

2 cloves of finely minced garlic

2 tbs of chopped fresh dill

1 tbs of chopped fresh mint

For the Red Pepper Butter, Em's Food Style:

1 tbs of unsalted butter

1/2 tsp of toasted cumin seeds*

1/2 tsp of sweet paprika

1/2 tsp of chilli flakes

Sea salt and pepper

Toast the cumin seeds in a dry fry pan until they are aromatic and just start to change colour. Keep an eye on them as you don't want the spice to burn.

Set aside to cool and once cooled, grind to a fine powder in a mortar and pestle or spice grinder.

Place the lamb mince, egg, breadcrumbs, 1 tsp of cumin, oregano, sea salt, pepper, parsley and onion in a large bowl and mix with slightly damp hands until well combined. Dampening your hands again, roll the mince mixture into small, bite sized balls (I used a heaped teaspoon of the mixture to reach the desired size, about the size of the hole between your thumb and forefinger when you pinch them together).

Heat a large frypan and add a little oil (you won't need a lot as lamb mince is quite fatty) and when the oil is nice and hot, fry the meatballs on either side until golden. It is quite a soft mixture so be gentle when turning, you can use two spoons if that is easier. Once cooked, transfer the meatballs to a plate and drain off any excess fat.

Return the pan to the heat and add the chicken stock. Use a wooden spoon to scrape the bottom of the pan and once simmering add the meatballs back to the pan. Cover with a lid and cook for approximately 10 minutes before removing them again with a slotted spoon before you add the yoghurt mixture.

While the meatballs are cooking, combine the yoghurt, egg, garlic, dill and mint with a whisk until nice and smooth. Ladle out about 1/2 a cup of the hot broth and slowly whisk it into the yoghurt mixture, this will prevent it from curdling when the yoghurt is poured into the pan. Pour the yoghurt mixture into the pan, stir to combine and allow the mixture to come to a simmer until it thickens slightly. Return the meatballs to the pan and spoon the sauce over, cover with a lid for 5 minutes.

Melt the butter in a small saucepan and once bubbling, add the cumin, paprika and chilli. Swirl the butter around to combine and season with a little salt and pepper.

To serve, divide your choice of rice between 4 serving bowls. Top with meatballs and yoghurt sauce and then drizzle over the hot butter mixture. Sprinkle over the toasted pine nuts and chopped fresh dill and serve with your choice of greens or salad.

*You can use ground cumin for this recipe but I really think the authenticity in this recipe comes from the toasted cumin seeds. They have a much greater depth of flavour and I think the flavour would severely lack with ground. It literally takes about 30-40 seconds to toast them and less than that to grind and is so completely worth it!

Leftover dill? You may want to cook this.....

<http://emsfoodforfriends.com.au/greek-fish-skewers-chargrilled-veg-tzatziki/>

