

Koftas and Jeweled Rice

While reading a mystery set in India recently, I was introduced to koftas: spiced ground meat served as a kabob. I decided to learn how to make them using plant-based product. For your dining convenience, I offer this recipe on Sunday to allow time for chilling.

Holy smoke - these things are good! When making these Asian/Middle-Eastern "meatballs," it's all about the spices!

Serve koftas with a nice yogurt dipping sauce and some Persian-style jeweled rice. An East-Asian style salad will finish the meal. "Bhojan ka aanand len!" (Enjoy the meal.)

Preparation time: 3 hours (allowing 2 hours to chill the koftas before cooking) - Servings: 4

Organize Your Ingredients!

Notes on Organizing

Be sure to prep and organize all of your ingredients before you start. You'll prep a total of 3 cloves of peeled garlic today: 2 cloves chopped in the koftas and 1 whole clove in the yogurt sauce. Prep 1-2/3 C. red onion: 2/3 C. chopped in the koftas and 1 C. thin-sliced in the kachumber. Prep 1/2 C. chopped yellow onion for the jeweled rice. Seed and chop 3 Serrano peppers.

Koftas

1 lb. Beyond Meat Burger (or equivalent)

Spice Paste for Koftas:

1 tsp. whole coriander seed
1 tsp. whole cumin seed
1 tsp. fenugreek seed
1 whole clove
1 tsp. whole black peppercorns

1 whole bay leaf
1 teaspoon paprika
1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. sugar
2 cloves garlic (smashed and chopped)
2/3 C. red onion (finely-chopped)
1 C. loosely packed cilantro leaves
1/2 tsp. freshly-grated ginger
2 serrano chiles (seeded)
3 T. soft goat cheese

Jeweled Rice

2 tsp. mustard seeds
2 T. olive oil
1/2 C. yellow onion (chopped)
1 T. canola oil
1 C. uncooked jasmine or long-grain brown rice
2-1/2 C. water
1 T. tomato paste
1/2 cube Not Chick'n Bouillon
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
Pinch of salt
1/4 C. raisins
1/4 C. dried apricot (sliced)
1/4 C. dried sour cherries
1/4 C. pistachios (toasted)
1/3 C. slivered almonds (toasted)

Salad

2 C. carrot (grated)
2 C. cabbage (shredded)
1 C. red onion (thin-sliced)
1 Serrano pepper (seeded/finely chopped)
1/3 C. cilantro (chopped)
2 T. lime juice
2 tsp. granulated sugar
2 tsp. olive oil
1 T. mint leaves (chopped)

Yogurt Sauce

1/2 C. cucumber (seeded and finely-chopped)
1/2 tsp. red chili powder
1/2 tsp. honey
1 T. lemon juice
1 C. plain, nonfat yogurt

Let's Prepare, Cook, and Plate This!

Basic Assembly Instructions

Thaw the ground plant-based "meat" overnight in the fridge or on the counter and then refrigerate early in the day. You may wish to warm some naan or pita bread to enjoy if you have some.

Koftas

Spice Paste:

1. Toast whole coriander, cumin, and fenugreek seeds with 1 whole clove and black peppercorns in a small dry frying pan over medium-high heat about 1 minute. Transfer to a spice grinder and add bay leaf, paprika, cayenne, salt and sugar. Grind well. Set aside.
2. Using a food processor, pulse garlic, onion, cilantro, grated ginger and chilis until well chopped.
3. Add the ground spices from grinder and pulse until you have a paste.
4. Roll spice paste mixture between a triple layer of paper towels. Fold over the ends to seal the roll and squeeze to absorb all moisture. When finished, the paste should be dry and crumbly.

Mix and Chill Koftas:

1. Melt goat cheese 15 seconds in the microwave and set aside.
2. Place 1 lb. thawed Beyond Meat (or equivalent product) in a large bowl and dump all of spice-paste into bowl. Add melted cheese to the bowl and mix with your hands until the mixture is well blended. Cover bowl and refrigerate for 2 hours.
3. When kofta mixture is well chilled, (2 hours or more) divide into 8 equal balls. Skewer each ball with a kabob stick and shape the meat over the stick into a sausage-shaped piece (about 3" long). Return kabobs to fridge until ready to cook.

(Prepare the remainder of the meal while koftas chill.)

Jeweled Rice

1. Heat olive oil in a medium saucepan until it starts to shimmer. Add mustard seeds and stir until seeds begin to pop. Remove from heat and pour seeds and oil into a dish. Set aside.
2. Measure 1 T. canola oil into the same medium saucepan. Add chopped yellow onions and stir until onions turn translucent.
3. Rinse brown rice thoroughly in a sieve, and add to pan with onions. Measure water and tomato paste into pan and bring to a boil.
4. Stir bouillon into water and tomato paste mixture and add rice. Stir well. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium, cover and cook 15-20 minutes until rice is at desired tenderness. Set a timer.
5. When timer sounds, add oil and mustard seeds. Stir well and add spices, dried fruit and nuts. Stir one more time to blend all ingredients.
6. Remove from heat, cover and set aside.

Salad

Toss grated carrot, shredded cabbage, sliced onion, chopped Serrano pepper, and cilantro leaves in a medium-sized bowl.

Mix lime juice, sugar, olive oil, and mint leaves and toss with vegetable mixture. Set Aside.

Yogurt Sauce

Stir all yogurt sauce ingredients until creamy smooth.

Pour into a small serving bowl and set aside.

When Ready to Cook Koftas

When ready to cook koftas, preheat oven to 375°.

Slide cookie sheet with koftas into the oven and cook 20-25 minutes, turning them to a new surface about every every 6 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool 5 minutes before serving.

(Use the warm oven to warm the Naan or pita bread once the koftas are cooked.)

Serve the Meal

Wrap some Naan or pita bread in foil and place in the oven when the koftas come out. Turn off heat and leave bread in the oven until you serve the meal.

Place two skewers of Koftas on each plate with 1 C. of the salad and 1 C. of the Jeweled Rice.

Serve the yogurt sauce and warm bread on the side.

Notes on today's Recipe

Often, on Sundays, I love having an old-world cooking day like this one. The payoff is enormous! Making a meal like this is not difficult. It just takes time for activities like thawing frozen meat and chilling the kofta mixture.

Let us know what you think, and ask any questions you may have! chezdon@plate6.com