

Middle Eastern Kabobs with Saffron Rice

This is a pretty basic Middle Eastern dinner. These Kabobs really work with plant-based Chick'n pieces. The Saffron Rice is an ancient Middle-Eastern standby and I enjoy the coolness of the cucumber/tomato salad to top it off. Add a piece of warm pita bread to the mix and you've got a lovely meal. Kabob skewers and a grill or griddle are needed for this recipe.

If you're having trouble finding saffron, or if it's not a spice you like, substitute a combination of 1/2 tsp. turmeric, 1/4 tsp. ground coriander, 1/4 tsp. ground cumin, 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon and 1 tsp. honey in place of the saffron.

Preparation Time: 55 minutes - Servings 2

Organize Your Ingredients!

Notes on Organizing

Organizing ingredients on small plates or in bowls is always a good way to get started. There are 3 different onion preps today: 1/2 C. finely-chopped yellow onion for the Saffron Rice, 1/2 of a red onion for the kabobs and 1/3 C. chopped green onions for the Cucumber Salad.

Saffron Rice

2 C. water
1 cube "Not Chick'n" bouillon
1/8 tsp. saffron threads
2 T. boiling water

2 tsp. extra virgin olive oil
1/2 C. yellow onion (finely chopped)
1 C. uncooked brown rice
2 tsp. butter
- or -
* alternative spicing suggested in instructions

Cucumber Salad and Pita Bread

Cucumber Salad:

1/3 C. green onions (chopped)
2 C. cucumber (peeled and chopped)
2 T. curly parsley (chopped)
1 slicing tomato (coarsely-chopped)
1/4 C. thick, plain, nonfat yogurt (stirred smooth)
1 T. rice wine vinegar

Bread:

2 rounds of pita bread

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Sauce:

1 garlic clove (smashed and chopped)
1/4 C. plain, nonfat yogurt
1 tsp. cornstarch
2 tsp. olive oil
1/2 tsp. paprika
1/8 tsp. cumin
dash of cinnamon
1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1/4 tsp. grated lemon rind
2 tsp. freshly squeezed lemon juice
pinch of salt and ground black pepper

Kabobs:

1 tsp. olive oil
6 Gardien Teriyaki Chicken strips (discard teriyaki sauce pouch)
- or -
1 large chicken breast (chopped into 1" cubes)

1/2 of a red bell pepper (seeded and cut into 1" squares)
6 oz. fresh pineapple (cut into 1" chunks)
1/2 of a large red onion (cut into 2" wedges)
vegetable oil (for oiling pan or grill)

Let's Prepare, Cook, and Plate This!

Basic Assembly Instructions

Prepare the Rice and Salad first. Everything should be ready once kabobs are cooked. When preparing the kabobs, be sure to brown the plant-based strips before assembling the kabobs.

Saffron Rice

1. Dissolve 1 cube "Not Chick'n" bouillon into 2 C. boiling water.
2. Grind 1/2 of the saffron threads in a mortar and pestle. Add just the crushed saffron threads to 2 T. boiling water. Let sit for 5 minutes.
3. Measure olive oil into a large saucepan and heat over medium-high heat. Add onions and stir until onions begin to caramelize. Add uncooked brown rice to onion mixture and toss 1-minute.
4. Add dissolved saffron, additional threads and bouillon stock to the onion/rice mixture. Bring to a boil, cover and cook 25 minutes over low heat. (Set a timer.)
- if you don't care for (or can't find saffron), use this alternate spice combo: 1/2 tsp. turmeric, 1/4 tsp. ground coriander, 1/4 tsp. ground cumin, 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon and 1 tsp. honey.
5. Fluff rice with a fork after 25 minutes. Turn off burner. Cover pan, let set aside until ready to dine.

Salad:

Cucumber Salad and Pita Bread

Stir all cucumber salad items together in a medium-sized bowl and let stand until ready to dine.

Pita Bread

Sprinkle a few drops of water on a couple rounds of whole-wheat pita bread and wrap in foil. Place in the oven with kabobs for about 5 minutes before you wish to dine. You can also warm the bread on the grill as it cools after you've grilled the kabobs.

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Kabob Sauce:

* Preheat grill or oven to 400°

1. Place chopped garlic in a medium-sized bowl.
2. Measure yogurt and cornstarch into the bowl and stir well.
Add olive oil and spices, grated lemon, lemon juice, salt and pepper to the yogurt. Stir well.

Assemble chicken or plant-based kabobs: (divide meat, veggies and pineapple to make 4 kabobs.)

1. Brown Chick'n strips in 1 tsp. oil and set aside. Cut browned strips into 3 equal pieces.
2. Using 4 Kabob skewers, pierce 2 pieces of browned Chick'n Strips or a couple of pieces of raw, sliced chicken. Alternate pieces of meat with red pepper, pineapple and onion until you've used up all prepped items on 4 skewers.
3. Cook kabobs on an outdoor grill or on an oiled griddle in the preheated oven. Cook 20 minutes, turning often. When cooked, if cooking on an outdoor grill, transfer kabobs to a shallow pan and cover with yogurt sauce. Return to covered grill for 5 minutes. If cooking in oven, cover kabobs with yogurt sauce and return to oven for 5 minutes. (Put foil-wrapped pita rounds in the oven with them.)
4. Place two Kabobs on each plate with 1-1/4 C. Saffron Rice and 1-1/4 C. cucumber/tomato salad.
5. Serve warm bread or pita bread on the side.

What I've Learned from this Recipe

It's the spice combinations that make Middle-Eastern and Indian food sing. Adding the acidity of lemon juice allows the flavors to step forward in perfect harmony.

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