

Yogurt- and Mint-Marinated Lamb Kebabs

Serves 4

Courtesy of L'Academie de Cuisine Chef Brian Patterson, for demo July 24th, 2015

Ras el hanout is a spice blend common in North African cooking, and features especially heavily in Moroccan cuisine. The name in Arabic means "head of the shop," and literally refers to the best spices the store has to offer. While it used to be only available at Middle Eastern grocers, specialty and well-stocked grocers now carry this popular spice blend. Each shop has their own unique blend, but a typical Ras el Hanout contains a mixture of cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, coriander, cumin, mace, nutmeg, and turmeric.

For the Marinade:

1 cup plain yogurt
 Zest and juice of 2 plump lemons
 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for the grill
 1/2 cup tightly packed fresh mint leaves
 1/4 cup tightly packed fresh cilantro leaves
 3 teaspoons minced garlic
 1 tablespoon kosher salt
 1 tablespoon sweet Hungarian paprika
 1 tablespoon ras el hanout (see Note)
 1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper

For the skewers:

2 pounds cubed lamb meat
 1 large red onion, sliced into 1 1/2-inch squares about 3 layers each
 1 large zucchini cut into quarters, center removed, and cut into 1 inch squares

1. Preheat a grill over medium high heat, and rub down with olive oil.
2. Combine all the ingredients for the marinade in a blender and puree until smooth. Coat the lamb in the marinade in a large plastic bag and marinate the lamb in the refrigerator for 4 to 8 hours.
3. Once the lamb is marinated, arrange the skewers: use two large bamboo skewers or one wide flat skewer per kebab (the two skewers will prevent the meat from spinning around the axis of one single skewer.) Thread the lamb onto the skewers, alternating with squares of onion and zucchini.
4. Grill the skewers on the grill over medium high heat, about 5 minutes per side (4 sides of each skewer.) Serve.

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