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FOOD

Recipe: Iranian Chelo Kebab

SEP 16, 2014 | 7:10 PM



Note:

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The rice is what everyone went crazy for in this dish. Chelo starts as a plain rice pilaf, but it's very buttery and it's made so that a crunchy golden crust forms on the bottom of the pot. Everyone wants a bite of the crust, but it's traditional in Iran to offer the crust to your guest. Sour ground sumac berries, available in most of Southern California's Near Eastern markets, is sprinkled over the dish.

Fresh onion juice is used to give the meat marinade a richer aroma than that of chopped onions. Saffron makes the kebab elegant, but if you can't get saffron, substitute 2 teaspoons ground cumin and 2 tablespoons ground coriander. Made with saffron, the marinade is also excellent with chicken and fish.

1 3/4 cups fragrant long-grain white rice such as basmati

Water

Salt

1/3 cup melted unsalted butter

Rinse rice in three changes of lukewarm water. Soak rice in cold water to cover with 1 1/2 tablespoons salt 1 hour.

Put 2 quarts water in pot, add 1 tablespoon salt and bring to boil. Drain soaked rice and add to boiling water. Boil until rice is nearly done but not soft, 5 to 10 minutes, stirring twice to keep grains from sticking together. Drain rice in colander and rinse with lukewarm water.

Put 1/3 of melted butter and 2 tablespoons water in bottom of pot. Using large spoon, sprinkle rice grains into pot, distributing evenly. Allow rice to form cone shape. Pour remaining melted butter over rice. With handle of wooden spoon, punch 2 to 3 holes from top of rice mound to bottom of pot.

Put dish towel or paper towels over pot, then cover with pot lid. Set pot on medium heat 10 to 15 minutes, then reduce heat to low 35 to 40 minutes. Can be kept in warm oven 1 hour.

KEBAB

5 large onions

1/8 teaspoon saffron threads

2 pounds boneless lamb or beef, in kebab pieces

Salt, pepper

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1/4 cup butter, melted, optional

Cilantro

4 onions, quartered, optional

1 to 2 teaspoons ground sumac, optional

Quarter 1 onion and reduce to fine puree in food processor (leave kitchen windows open because of fumes). Push puree through fine strainer. Grind saffron to powder in mortar, or on plate using back of spoon, and dissolve in onion juice.

Clean meat and trim excess fat. Mix meat with onion juice marinade, cover with plastic wrap and marinate 1 hour at room temperature.

When ready to cook meat, season with salt and pepper to taste and thread onto skewers. Grill until done. Brush with melted butter.

To serve, set Chelo pot in sink of cold water 1 minute to loosen crust on bottom of pot. Remove pot lid. Turn large serving plate upside-down and cover pot with it. Holding pot and plate tightly together, turn both upside-down. Rice should come out on plate. Remove pot. Divide crust among diners and serve rice with Kebab. Quarter remaining onions. Garnish with cilantro and raw onions, and sprinkle kebab with sumac.

Makes 4 to 6 servings. Each of 4 servings contains about: 658 calories; 780 mg sodium; 151 mg cholesterol; 24 grams fat; 66 grams carbohydrates; 40 grams protein; 0.29 gram fiber.



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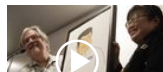
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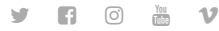
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