



### **Tender Lamb Kebab with Cinnamon (Kebab Daygee) (Tested)**

#### **Serves 4 to 6**

In our Western culture, we automatically assume that anything referred to as a “kebab” comes on a stick! But in Afghanistan it seems, kebabs can be virtually anything: meat or chicken, skewered or not, barbecued or oven baked or pan fried, cut into chunks, ground, or eaten as a chop. Perhaps we can assume that any type of meat that is cut into chunks qualifies as a kebab?

Whatever unorthodox form it takes, this delicious combination of lamb, onions and cinnamon is meant to be devoured and scooped up with slabs of fresh steaming naan. This dish is incredibly easy to make – marinate, then bake. Take note that it marinates overnight, but marinating in the morning to bake in the evening works well, too. I purchased a piece of lamb shoulder and cut my meat into chunks. Lamb shoulder has nice marbling and makes for a very tender cut. You could use lamb stew meat as well, which is a combination of different cuts of lamb.

I will be making this dish again and again, it ranks as one of the best lamb dishes I’ve ever had. And DON’T forget the cinnamon. Sprinkle liberally with plain ground cinnamon once you’ve put the lamb into the serving dish. Serve with a platter of crunchy cucumbers, a green salad, or see this [recipe](#) previously posted for tomato salad.

#### **Ingredients**

¾ cup Greek yogurt, or whole-milk yogurt

3 tbsp. olive oil

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 tbsp. ground coriander

½ tsp. black pepper

2 tsp. Kosher salt

2 ½ lbs. lamb stew meat, cut into 2-inch chunks (I used lamb shoulder cut up)

2 large onions, peeled, sliced thin

Ground cinnamon

### **Directions**

In a large bowl mix together the yogurt, oil, garlic, coriander, pepper and salt and stir well. Add the lamb and onions and coat evenly with the yogurt mixture. Cover and marinate overnight.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Pull the lamb out a half hour before you are ready to cook. Put the lamb into large pot or Dutch oven and cover with a lid. Put it into the oven and cook until the lamb is very tender (about 1¼ to 1½ hours). Remove the lid, give it a stir, and continue to cook another 20 to 30 minutes until some of the liquid has reduced and you have a thick, oniony sauce.

Turn the meat onto a platter and sprinkle with ground cinnamon. Serve with warm naan bread and plain yogurt. You can season the yogurt with a little salt and stir in some grated cucumbers or chopped mint if you like.

Recipe submitted by Linda McElroy, created by Humaira Ghilzai, used with permission.

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## **Afghan Nachos--Chickpeas, Creamy Greek Yogurt and Crispy Pita Chips**

**Serves 4 to 6**

### **Ingredients**

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 cup diced green onions

One 15-ounce can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

1 tsp. cumin

1 tsp. paprika

1 cup whole Greek yogurt

1 tsp. sea salt

3 cloves garlic, diced and smashed into a paste

One 8-ounce bag of pita chips

Cilantro leaves for garnish, lightly chopped

## **Directions**

In a sauté pan over high heat add the olive oil, heat. Add green onions, sauté for one minute. Add the chickpeas, cumin, and paprika to the pan. Stir gently over low heat. Once the aroma of cumin fills the kitchen and the chickpeas are warmed through, around five minutes, take the pan off the burner.

In a small bowl mix yogurt, salt and garlic.

Arrange the pita chips in beautiful serving platter or bowl—top with the chickpeas and the creamy yogurt sauce. Sprinkle with cilantro leaves.

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## **Afghan Flat Bread (Nan) (Tested)**

### **Makes 3 large ovals**

Have you ever made pizza dough? Or purchased pizza dough and rolled it out to make your own pizza? Well, making “nan” is just like that. Nothing complicated here, just goes by a different name!

I’ve made a few changes to the original recipe. Originally calling for two cups of water, I found that I had to add another cup of flour because the dough was too wet. So I’ve recommended adding only 1½ cups to start and see if that is enough. If not, then slowly add a bit more one tablespoon at a time. You want the dough to be soft, but not sticky. If it’s sticky add a bit more flour until it’s right. I’ve also made a few slight changes to the way the bread is baked, streamlining the process.

Nigella seeds are sprinkled on top of the bread, but those can be hard to find. I recommend trying black sesame seeds, or even white ones. But for fun I love using “everything bagel seasoning blend” which you can find at Trader Joe’s.

### **Ingredients**

5 cups bread flour

2 tsp. Kosher salt

1 packet yeast

2 tbsp. vegetable oil

1 ½ cups warm water

Nigella seeds, black sesame seeds, or “everything bagel seasoning”

1 spray bottle filled with water

## **Directions**

Put the flour, salt and yeast in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a dough blade, or a stand mixer (I used a stand mixer). Process it for a few seconds to mix the ingredients. Continue to process as you dribble the oil into the flour. Next, slowly add the water to the flour while continuing to mix. Keep adding water until the dough begins to clean the sides of the bowl, and forms a ball. Knead for a minute longer.

Turn the dough out into an oiled bowl and twirl the dough around so that it is coated with oil. Cover with wrap and let rise until doubled in bulk, anywhere from one to two hours, depending on how warm your kitchen is.

Preheat the oven to 500 degrees about ½ an hour before you are ready to bake.

Punch down the dough and divide into three equal balls. On a lightly floured surface, stretch and elongate the dough into an oval shape, about ½-inch thick, the length of your largest cookie sheet. Place the dough onto the cookie sheet. Make three shallow cuts into the dough. Sprinkle with the seeds and lightly press into the dough.

Place the dough in the oven, spray five times with your spray bottle and bake for 5 minutes. After 5 minutes, spray the oven again five times, and continue to bake for another 5 minutes. The nan should be golden brown and crusty on the outside.

To keep the bread moist, wrap the warm bread in a large dishcloth until it cools down.

For dramatic presentation place in middle of table and let everybody tear off their own piece of bread.

Recipe submitted by Linda McElroy, adapted from <http://www.afghancultureunveiled.com>

Photo credit: Linda McElroy





### **Afghan Butter Cookies (Kulche Birinjee) (Tested)**

**Yield: 3 dozen**

These delicious butter cookies call for the addition of pistachios and cardamom, making them uniquely Afghan. The original recipe called for using rice flour and egg whites. After following the recipe faithfully though, I found that I didn't care for the texture of the cookies. And I never like to waste egg yolks if it's not necessary.

So, I've adapted this recipe by using all-purpose flour, thereby saving you a trip to the store for specialty flour. And I've substituted one whole egg for two egg whites, no waste!

#### **Ingredients**

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup butter (1½ sticks), slightly softened

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar

1 egg

2 cups all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. ground cardamom

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup coarsely chopped pistachios

pinch of salt

36 additional whole pistachios for garnish

### **Directions**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Add the butter and sugar to a mixing bowl and beat until light and fluffy. Add the egg and continue to mix until just incorporated. Gradually add the flour, cardamom, chopped pistachios, and salt.

Refrigerate the dough for 30 minutes if it is too soft to work with, otherwise continue.

Pinch off walnut-sized pieces of dough and roll into a ball. Place on an ungreased baking sheet and flatten lightly with your fingers. Make cross hatch marks on top of the cookie with a fork, as you would for a peanut butter cookie. Press a whole pistachio into the top of the cookie.

Bake for 12 to 14 minutes. The cookie will still be pale, but should look set.

Recipe submitted by Linda McElroy, adapted from <http://www.afghancultureunveiled.com>

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## Afghan Culture and Cuisine

Provided by Sahar

Afghanistan is a country in the heart of Asia that is usually mistaken to be in the Middle East. There are 34 provinces in Afghanistan. Its population of 34 million is made up of many different ethnic groups who speak different languages and have their own cultural practices. Some of the largest ethnic groups are, in order, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Nuristani, Baloch and Pashayi. More than 99 percent of the Afghan population is Muslim. The literacy rate among females in Afghanistan is 24 percent.

Some of the festivals celebrated in Afghanistan are the two religious holidays called Eid. The first is the celebration of the end of Ramadan, and the second is the remembrance of the event when prophet Abraham is asked to sacrifice his son Ismail. In both Eids, everyone makes new clothes to wear on the three days of the Eid holiday. People put henna on their hands and women get designs on their hands and feet. On the first Eid, people eat sweets and visit families and friends. On the second Eid, every family who has the means sacrifices a cow, goat, or sheep. Some of the meat is donated and some of it is cooked and served to the guests who visit. Some of it is also saved for the families themselves.

The other holiday or festival in Afghanistan is the New Year which starts on the first day of spring or March 21. The New Year is mainly celebrated in a festive way in the northern province of Balkh in Mazar-e Sharif city where there is a centuries-old mosque.

Afghanistan has some of the most delicious cuisine in the world. Bread is an important element and is on the table for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It is eaten with almost every meal and seen as a sign of blessing.

The national dish of Afghanistan, called Qabeli Palaw, is cooked in most of the central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. It is rice cooked with lamb or beef, raisins, carrots, onions and other spices. Afghan cuisine is also famous for its dumpling-like dish, Manto, which is filled with a mixture of meat and vegetables and topped with yogurt, tomato sauce and mint. Bolani is another Afghan dumpling dish – a piece of thin rolled dough the size of an egg roll filled with vegetables, fried in oil and served with chatni (chutney).

Afghanistan has its first national park, Band-e Amir, in Bamyan province, the city that is also home of two Buddhas that were destroyed by the Taliban.

Marriages are usually arranged among Afghans. Dating between a man and woman rarely happens in big cities like Kabul or Mazar. When it does, it is only out of the sight of families through secret phone conversations or visiting in public spaces. The proposal is always made by the parents of the groom to the girl's home. In most cases the family of the girl asks for dowry. Some form of a gift is given to the family of the bride on the day of the engagement, an average

amount of \$3,000 – \$4,000. There are cases in rural areas where the family of the girl specifically asks for \$10,000 – \$20,000 (US) and unless that amount is paid during specific period of time, the girl lives in the parents' house.

Wedding festivals are usually very big. More than 1,000 people are invited, everyone is fed, and brides are gifted with large amounts of gold jewelry and luxurious outfits. There are usually three separate parties. The first is the Henna Night where only women are invited and henna is applied to the bride's hands. The night is full of music, dance and food. The second is the big day of the wedding where men and women are invited in two separate wedding halls. The third is the after-wedding party where women come and bring gifts to the newly wedded couple. The gifts are usually in the form of kitchen appliances, electronics or other things that the newly wedded couple may need. Married couples in most cases live in the house of the groom's parents. It is very rare that couples move to their own house after their wedding.