

Infuse meatballs with the fresh flavor of summer herbs

By **Genevieve Ko**
Los Angeles Times

This time of year, tender herbs grow like weeds in gardens and come cheap in markets. The only downside is needing to use them up before the plants go to seed or before grocery store bunches go slimy. The most obvious options are pesto and tabbouleh, but meatballs are my favorite way to finish off my herbs.

Not only do leafy herbs add a bright freshness to smoky grilled meatballs, they also lighten the texture. A generous bunch of scallions do the same, as do oats. This gluten-free alternative to breadcrumbs brings a subtle sweetness to the meat mix.

Inspired by the kebabs and keftes of the Middle East, these meatballs include aromatic spices and a dip. While savory yogurt sauces are the classic pairing — and would taste great here — pureed avocado delivers a similar creamy coolness without any dairy. Blending in lots of herbs and lemon juice gives it enough nuance and flavor to work as a dip for anything else, such as chips or crudites.

The meatball recipe below can be varied according to



Mariah Tauger / Los AngelesTimes-TNS

Swap your favorite herbs and spices into the mix.

your taste and whatever you have on hand. Keep the proportions the same, but use any tender leafy herbs. You can toss in some heartier herbs too; a teaspoon of minced thyme or rosemary would be nice. As for the spices, cumin and coriander are solid starting points, but allspice, Urfa biber, or mace would work too. And if you love spicy foods, stir some chile flakes right into the meatball mix and serve the

meatballs with hot sauce.

SUMMER HERB MEATBALLS WITH AVOCADO DIP

30 minutes. Serves 4.2

- 1½ cups packed leafy green herbs, such as parsley, cilantro and mint
- 5 scallions, very thinly sliced
- ½ cup quick-cooking oats

- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 pound ground beef (80/20) or lamb
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin or coriander or a combination
- Kosher salt
- Aleppo pepper or other red chile flakes, for sprinkling (optional)
- 1 large ripe avocado, halved, pitted, and peeled
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice

- 1. Set up a charcoal grill

- 2 to 4 tablespoons superfine sugar, optional
- Sliced cucumber and lime, if desired

- 1. Put mint sprigs into a clear 2-quart pitcher. Use the handle of a wooden spoon to lightly crush the mint. (This releases flavor and aroma.) Fill the pitcher with 2 quarts cool water. Add the tea bags.
- 2. Set the pitcher in full sun for 6 to 8 hours. Remove the tea bags; leave the mint. Stir in sugar to sweeten to taste, if desired. Refrigerate to chill. Tea will keep several days.
- 3. To serve, pour over ice in tall glasses. Garnish with cucumber and lime slices.

REFRESH

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Put oil, mayo, vinegar, salt and pepper into a blender. Process until smooth. Add 2 tablespoons water and the avocado flesh. Puree until smooth. Add mint leaves. Pulse to finely chop the mint. Refrigerate in a covered container and use within a couple of days.

BAKED SWEET POTATOES WITH MINT-SESAME BUTTER

Prep: 10 minutes
Bake: 1 hour

Makes: 4 servings

- 4 medium sweet potatoes, about 3 pounds total, scrubbed
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened, OR organic coconut oil
- 3 tablespoons each, chopped: fresh mint, chives
- 2 teaspoons dark sesame oil
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- ½ teaspoon salt

- 1. Heat oven to 375 degrees. Place sweet potatoes on a baking sheet. Pierce tops in several places with the tip of a sharp knife. Bake until potatoes are tender when a knife is inserted in center, 50 to 60 minutes.
- 2. Meanwhile, put butter in

a small bowl. Stir in remaining ingredients.

3. Let potatoes cool on the baking sheet, about 5 minutes. Use a knife to cut a large X in tops of potatoes. Use your fingers to squeeze the potato open at the X. Spoon a quarter of the butter into each potato. Serve hot.

MINTY SUN TEA

Prep: 5 minutes
Steep: 6 to 8 hours
Chill: Several hours
Makes: 2 quarts

- 4 large sprigs fresh mint, rinsed
- 4 family-size iced tea bags or 8 to 12 regular-size black or orange-peko tea bags

DORY

Continued from Page 1B

I was more interested in licking the melting sweet cream from the cone than hearing about the history of the area, but my father insisted otherwise. He wasn't a man to talk a great deal, so when he spoke we listened.

Standing beside him there under that jutting rocky formation, he pointed skyward and said with great pride...

"There is your Bridge of the Gods to see for the last time. Tomorrow it will be gone."

Then he proceeded to tell us of how the land once had stretched clear across the river to the other side and that the waters of the river in time had undercut it so that it formed a natural bridge and people could walk across it. He had been born in 1894 and when he was young the bridge had stuck out further than it did at the time of our visit. He had played on it as

a youngster and folks said it was dangerous and should be blasted down. Over the years it had gradually fallen away or given way to man's machinery until only the portion left standing remained of the old bridge. The last vestige of the old natural bridge was to be leveled the following week with plans in the offing for a new bridge to be built in its place and extend across the river from the Oregon side to the opposite Washington side.

There was an intensity and haunting sound to his voice that made me listen closely as though what he was saying of the loss was of historical importance. I wondered why he cared so much but it struck the scene in my memory that has not dimmed with my own aging. Now I know that he was losing a part of his childhood from his life and it would always remain a lonesome memory as scheduled modern machinery swept away the rubble and debris

from reality just as it did Celilo Falls that I also saw for the last time.

Was there ever a real Bridge of the Gods located across the Columbia River or a Celilo Falls at its water's edge?

Yes, I believe there was from what I saw in mine and what my Dad had experienced in his youth and wanted his children to know.

Nature is capable of wondrous things and man is capable of changing them as though they never existed.

In my mind's eye I see the last remnant of the stone and rocky bridge jutting out above us and then I see the fishermen bringing in their catch from the Columbia River onto their pilings at Celilo. Try telling me they didn't exist!

Yes, I believe there was from what I saw and what my Dad had experienced in his youth and taught me.

How fortunate I am to know and to have seen.

BEETS

Continued from Page 1B

If the roots develop black bitter areas, the soil lacks boron. Correct this deficiency by mixing ¼ teaspoon of household borax in 12 gallons of water and sprinkling the solution lightly around the plants. Subsequent rains or watering will wash the boron into the root zone.

Beets are ready to be pulled up when they are of good size. The roots are most tender when they are less than 2 inches across. To see if the plants are ready, push away some soil and look at the roots before pulling them up.

The Chenopodiaceae are apparently very edible. At least two of them are the common weed, lambsquarters, and the garden vegetable,

beets.

GARDEN CHORES

- Remove infected leaves from roses. Pick up fallen leaves. Continue fungicidal sprays as needed.
- Keep deadheading spent flowers from annuals to

stimulate continued bloom.

- Apply final treatment for borers on hardwood trees.
- Early peach varieties begin ripening now.

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for direct heat grilling or heat the burners of a gas grill on medium-high. (Alternatively, heat a large skillet or grill pan on a stove-top over medium-high heat.) If using bamboo skewers, soak 8 in a shallow dish in cold water.

2. Pulse 2 cups of herbs in a food processor until finely chopped. Or, chop the herbs by hand. Reserve 1 tablespoon sliced scallions.

3. Mix the oats, egg, beef, cumin, finely chopped herbs, sliced scallions and 1 1/2 teaspoons salt in a large bowl with your hands until well blended. Roll the mixture into 24 balls (about 1 ounce each). Slide 3 balls onto each skewer.

4. Grill, turning once, until charred on the outside and cooked through inside, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer to a serving dish. Sprinkle with Aleppo pepper if desired. Let rest while preparing the sauce.

5. While the meatballs rest, puree the avocado, lemon juice, remaining 1 tablespoon sliced scallions, remaining half cup herbs, and 1 teaspoon salt in the same food processor used to chop the herbs. Or, you can finely chop the herbs by hand

and smash and mix everything together until smooth. Transfer to a serving bowl and serve with the meatballs.

Make Ahead:The meatballs can be rolled, skewered, and refrigerated for up to 1 day. The avocado dip can be pureed, covered with plastic wrap, and refrigerated for up to 1 day.

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