



AP Photo/Sara Moulton

Lamb keftas.

## Lamb kebabs is a dish inspired by New York City street food

By SARA MOULTON  
Associated Press

One of the great things about living in New York City is its wealth of street food, which provides us with easy access to dishes from the four corners of the earth.

One of my all-time faves — a favorite in the Middle East and Far East — goes by many names, the most common of which is kefta kebab.

It is heavily spiced ground meat — usually lamb or beef or a combination of the two — that's been molded into sausage-like oblongs, grilled on skewers, and served with a garlicky tahini/yogurt sauce in a pita pocket or flatbread. So good! It's no wonder that, with minor variations, kefta is a staple of Middle Eastern cuisine from Afghanistan to Turkey.

Happily, it's quick and easy. One of the dish's two key elements is texture. The meat should be firm, not to say springy. If you buy your meat at a supermarket, just follow the instructions in the recipe and pulse it in a food processor until smooth and almost paste-like. If you buy your meat from a butcher, ask him or her to grind it extra fine. Then, after adding all the spices, knead the meat on the counter (yes, like dough) until it's smooth and sticky. This will take 5 to 10 minutes. (It'll also do wonders to tone up your forearms.)

The second of the recipe's key elements is its spices. Different cultures call for different spices, so I chose the mix that most appealed to me: cumin, paprika, allspice, pepper and fresh parsley. Onions and garlic are universal, but they're always added in raw form. I opted instead to sauté the onions and

garlic to maximize their flavor and sweetness before adding them to the meat mixture.

Once the meat has been seasoned, it needs to be chilled. This firms up the meat so that it holds its shape on the skewers when grilled. It also gives the seasonings time to permeate the meat. Three hours of chilling is good; 24 hours is better. One tip about shaping the meat on the skewers: The meat will be easier to mold if you keep wetting your hands with cold water.

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### GRILLED GROUND LAMB KEBABS

This recipe calls for a succulent mix of lamb and beef, but you're welcome to go all one way or the other.

**Start to finish:** 35 minutes plus 3 to 24 hours for chilling

**Servings:** 4

**For the kefta:**

- ½ cup finely chopped onion
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for brushing on the meat
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- ½ pound ground beef
- ½ pound ground lamb
- 1½ teaspoons paprika, preferably hot smoked
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1/3 cup minced parsley

**For the sauce:**

- 1/3 cup tahini, stirred well
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 2 to 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon minced garlic
- Four 6-inch pitas with pockets, ¼ of the top cut off to form pocket
- Shredded romaine lettuce for garnish
- Hot sauce for garnish

**Make the kefta:**

In a medium skillet, cook the onion in the oil over medium low heat, stirring occasionally, until it is golden brown, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, 1 minute. Transfer the mixture to a small bowl and chill until it comes to room temperature.

In a food processor, combine the cooled onion mixture, the beef, lamb, paprika, cumin, salt, allspice and pepper and pulse the mixture until it forms a paste and is tacky to the touch. Transfer the mixture to a bowl and stir in the parsley.

Divide the meat mixture into 8 equal portions and shape each portion into a log around a skewer, about 5 inches long and 1 inch wide. Cover and chill the skewered meat for at least 3 hours and up to overnight.

**Meanwhile, make the sauce:**

In a medium bowl whisk together the tahini, yogurt, lemon juice, garlic and 3 tablespoons water, adding additional water if necessary to achieve a pourable consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Preheat the grill to medium. Lightly oil the meat on both sides and grill it, turning often for about 6 minutes or until it is firm to the touch and cooked through. Pull the meat off the skewers and transfer two logs to each of 4 pitas. Top the meat with one fourth of the sauce and some shredded lettuce and serve with the hot sauce on the side.

*Nutrition information per serving: 482 calories; 255 calories from fat; 28 g fat (7 g saturated fat; 1 g trans fat); 74 mg cholesterol; 722 mg sodium; 25 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 3 g sugar; 32 g protein.*



AP Photo/Melissa d'Arabian

Lemon pesto chicken salad.

## Zingy salad makes for a fast, healthy picnic lunch

By MELISSA D'ARABIAN  
Associated Press

In our small hometown, Sunday evening's concert in the park is more than just a gathering of locals and tourists. It's how we mark the passage of time between May and September.

Over the years, we've become picnicking experts. My top two pieces of advice on picnic-planning are keep it simple and keep it flavorful. Because the getting ready — packing up a tablecloth or blanket and all the dishes — takes time, I've learned to make the menu extra-simple. But extra simple doesn't mean sacrificing on flavor. My solution is to turn

to a trusted supermarket shortcut, the rotisserie chicken, as a starting point for a deceptively simple, yet unbelievably complex-tasting, chicken salad. A very distant cousin to the over-creamy chicken salad grandma used to make, this dish gets its garlicky-herbaceous flavor from pre-made pesto. A generous helping of lemon zest adds depth and balance. But the secret of this dish is capers added, with the juice.

Pack a thermal container of this chicken salad along with whole wheat pita halves, a head of lettuce for lettuce wraps, raw vegetables and a big bunch of grapes, and you have a strong picnic game for Sunday, or anytime.

### LEMON-PESTO CHICKEN SALAD

**Start to Finish:** 15 minutes  
**Yield:** 4 servings

**For the dressing:**

- 3 tablespoons prepared pesto
- 3 tablespoons low-fat plain Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons capers, brine included (do not drain)
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

**For the salad:**

- ½ rotisserie chicken, cubed (about 2 ½ cups)
- ½ cup finely chopped celery
- 1 cup cherry tomato halves
- 1 onion, chopped
- Lemon wedges and parsley for garnish (optional)

To make the dressing, mix all the dressing ingredients in a small bowl with a spoon. In a large bowl, place the chicken, celery, tomato, and a green onion. Spoon the dressing on top and stir to coat. Chill until serving. Serve with lettuce wraps, pita, or tortillas.

*Nutrition information per serving: 243 calories; 107 calories from fat; 12 g fat (3 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 80 mg cholesterol; 296 mg sodium; 5 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 3 g sugar; 28 g protein.*

## STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO

# Not just a winter playground

By JOHN LUMPKIN  
Associated Press

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, Colo. — Skiers thrive during winter on Steamboat Springs' trademarked dry "Champagne powder" snow, but outdoor pursuits on mild summer days can rival those mountain experiences. Call it a back-to-the-future effect because travelers in the early 1900s first came here for seasonal hunting, fishing and the open-air hot springs.

On the Yampa River, you will find tubers floating under downtown bridges, sometimes joined by kayakers. Runners pace each other through shade and open meadow on multi-purpose trails lining the river's banks. Hikers and mountain bikers can explore the surrounding mountain slopes.

And on the porch of the Haymaker Golf clubhouse, it's not unusual to see bicycles with golf clubs stored vertically in the saddlebags as an alternative to motorized golf carts.

"People that play them really enjoy them," said Tom Taylor, head professional at Haymaker. He introduced the golf cycles in 2015 and ordered more for this summer. Walkers and golf cyclists outnumber the players who ride in carts, consistent with other physical activity that defines summer in this resort town.

The backdrop for Haymaker's first hole is stunning: the western side of a high Rocky Mountain pass called Rabbit Ears, elevation 9,426 feet. You also take in dramatic views of the pass on the drive to Steamboat from Denver, a 3.5-hour trip via I-70, then north to U.S. 40 from the Silverthorne exit.

But park the car once you arrive and walk or rent bikes if you're staying in Steamboat's center. That's what my wife and I did during our stay in a 1,700-square-foot condo with a wrap-around balcony, outdoor grill and views of Mount Werner. The \$450 nightly cost, split among friends, seemed like a



John Lumpkin via AP

**In this Aug. 18, 2015 photo, visitors to Fish Creek Falls are perched on log near the base of the falls in Steamboat Springs, Colo.**

bargain.

Galleries, restaurants, fly fishing and the colors and calming beauty of Yampa River Botanic Park's trails, ponds and gardens are all within walking distance. The historic F.M. Light & Sons, a Western store heralded by ubiquitous highway signs since 1928, is a short stroll along the town's main artery, Lincoln Avenue, as is Natural Grocers, where we bought tender grass-fed steaks and organic greens for a "stay-in" dinner on our balcony.

Around the corner was Winona's, which deserved repeat trips for lunches of "Sunshine Salad" — curried chicken, sunflower seeds, grapes and berries — or traditional hoagies and gyros.

The new Salt & Lime restaurant has taken over the long-running Rio Grande

Grill's location, offering open-air second-floor seating, specialty tequilas and funky entrees like bison tacos. When I inquired with the Chamber of Commerce about Salt & Lime's emergence, the receptionist said, "There's already a crowd there on the roof."

Steamboat is home to Texas emigre Verne Lundquist, the nationally known CBS sportscaster. "There is no celebrity factor, an element that defines some of the other resorts in Colorado," he said, adding, "The best part of a Steamboat summer is the diversity of opportunities. On a Saturday night, you'll find the rodeo arena filled to capacity, while two blocks away, a rock and roll group or a country band or a hip-hop star will perform a free concert in front of 2,000 at the

base of Howelsen Hill, where the ski jumps are located."

Strawberry Park Hot Springs, which lured long-ago visitors, remain open year-round with shuttle service and 104-degree mineral water.

Four miles from downtown Steamboat is Fish Creek Falls, so take a car or, if you have the stamina, a bike. A spellbinding 280-foot drop, the falls are accessed by descending a quarter-mile from the parking lot (altitude 7,440) to its base. Beer aficionados may perceive something familiar; the fall's image first appeared on Coors Banquet bottles and cans in 1937 and remains on those products today.

Our first night's dinner was just across the street from the condo at E3 Chophouse, owned by the LaRoche family of professional baseball players. Why the name E3? Adam LaRoche won Major League Baseball's Gold Glove Award for best fielder at first base while playing for the Washington Nationals. "E" is the abbreviation for "error" in a scoring chart and "3" is first baseman, so "E3" means "error on the first baseman," LaRoche's nod to humility. (LaRoche made national news this year when he quit baseball, giving up a \$13 million salary after team management said his son was no longer welcome in the clubhouse of his then-current team, the Chicago White Sox.)

Brother Andy, a former major leaguer, plays for the minor-league Sugar Land, Texas, Skeeters, and Jeff LaRoche is on the scene in Steamboat, making sure the steaks are flash-cooked in his 1,800-degree over-fired broiler to seal juices. The beef comes from their ranch in Kansas.

"Hey, we had a ranch. The steakhouse would be a great opportunity to get rid of our beef," quipped Jeff. After baseball, he moved to Vail, but didn't like Interstate 70 "in my backyard." On to Steamboat Springs, because "you have to want to get here. There's nothing past us."