Culinary Adventures Along the Silk Road

By

Scott Levi

National Endowment for the Humanities
Summer Institute, Central Asia in World History
Ohio State University
Department of History

July 23, 2016

Order List

HERBS AND VEGETABLES
12 tomatoes, large and ripe
18 onions, yellow
18 cucumbers
24 red radishes
2 bunch scallions
2 bunch Italian parsley
2 bunch fresh dill
4 bulbs garlic
3 lb. carrots, matchstick cut

MEAT
2 x 6-8 lb leg of lamb (i.e. 2 boneless legs, one for kebab, one for plov)
9 lb chicken thighs (boneless)

DAIRY
2½ lb feta cheese, crumbled
1½ c. sour cream (NOT fat free – as high in fat as possible)
1 lb unsalted butter
6 c. Greek yogurt (NOT low fat – as high in fat as possible)

OTHER
Naan bread – 36 pieces to warm and serve
9 cups Basmati rice
Red wine vinegar
Dry white wine
Vegetable oil

Tomato and Cucumber Salad
Achik Chuchuk

4 large ripe tomatoes, sliced
2 medium yellow onions, peeled, halved and thinly sliced
4 cucumbers, peeled, seeds removed, and thinly sliced
Salt to taste
Freshly ground black pepper
Pinch cayenne pepper or sharp paprika (optional)
3 T. red wine vinegar
4 t. vegetable oil

Combine all the vegetables in a large bowl and sprinkle with salt, black pepper and cayenne pepper or paprika. Add the vinegar and oil and toss gently. Refrigerate for an hour, and then allow to return to room temperature before serving.

Serves 6

White Cheese Salad
Suzmali Kujk Salat

¾ pound feta cheese
½ c. sour cream
2 cucumbers, peeled, seeds removed and chopped
2/3 c. white radish (daikon), peeled and grated, or 8 red radishes, chopped
3 scallions, chopped
¼ c. chopped fresh parsley
¼ c. chopped fresh coriander (optional)
1 T. fresh dill, minced
1 t. cumin seeds (toasted and coarsely ground)
Salt to taste
Pinch cayenne pepper or sharp paprika

Crumble the feta cheese and gently stir into the sour cream, mixing with a wooden spoon until smooth. Stir in the cucumbers, radishes and scallions, and then add the parsley, coriander, dill and cumin.

Sprinkle in the salt. Note that the amount of salt needed will depend upon the saltiness of the feta cheese. Add the cayenne or paprika, stir well, and chill.

Serves 6-8

Lamb Kebabs
Shashlik

2 lb lamb, preferably from the leg, cut into 1½-inch cubes
1 medium yellow onion, peeled and very thinly sliced
2 T. cumin seeds, toasted and crushed
1 t. salt
¼ t. freshly ground black pepper
1 c. dry white wine
½ c. vegetable oil
Italian flat leaf parsley

Put the lamb cubes into a glass bowl. Combine the onion, cumin seeds, salt, pepper, white wine, and oil. Pour the marinade over the lamb cubes and add just enough water to cover the meat.

Marinade for at least 8 hours, or overnight, in the refrigerator.

Drain off the marinade and thread the meat onto skewers, taking care to leave space between each piece of meat. (Note: in traditional Central Asian cooking, each piece of lamb is separated by a cubed piece of fat from the *dumba*, the fatty tail on a fat-tailed sheep.)

Grill the lamb over hot coals or in the broiler for approximately 10-12 minutes, more or less depending upon personal taste.

Garnish with sliced onions and parsley.

Serves 4

Chicken Kebab
Tovuk Shashlik

1 large yellow onion, peeled and minced
½ t. salt
½ c. red wine vinegar
¼ c. vegetable oil
½ c. water
1 t. cumin seed, toasted and finely ground
1 t. powdered coriander
1 t. crushed coriander seeds
3 lb chicken thighs, cubed
3 T. melted butter

Combine first 8 ingredients and mix well. Place marinade in a large nonreactive bowl (preferably glass) and add the cubed chicken. Allow it to marinate for 8-10 hours, or overnight.

Thread the chicken cubes onto skewers, leaving space between each piece.

Brush the chicken with melted butter.

Grill over hot coals, or in a broiler, until cooked through, about 8-12 minutes.

Serves 6

Yogurt Sauce

2 c. plain Greek yogurt
3 medium garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
salt
4 T. chopped coriander or dill

Combine all ingredients and stir to mix well. Chill for at least 6 hours.

Lamb Plov

½ c. vegetable oil (or corn oil)
1½ lb lamb meat, trimmed of fat and cut into 1½-inch cubes (reserve fat)
6 carrots, peeled and cut into matchstick-sized strips
2 large yellow onions, thinly sliced
1 t. paprika
¼ t. ground turmeric
2 t. cumin seeds, toasted and crushed
Salt
Pepper
½ c. water
3 c. rice, rinsed till clear (traditionally made with short grain rice, though basmati works well)
1 whole head of garlic, with outer stem removed
6 c. boiling water

Place a large, heavy, cast-iron Dutch oven or similar vessel over medium-high heat. Render lamb fat until the liquid coats the pot and begins to smoke. Remove the (now crispy) fat solids and set aside. (Note: in Central Asia, this lamb crackling is called the *jizza*. It is commonly salted and enjoyed as a delicacy before the meal.)

Add vegetable oil and return to temperature.

Add the sliced onions and cook till liquid evaporates and onions are browned, about 10 minutes.

Add cubed meat and brown on all sides, stirring frequently, for 5-6 minutes.

Add carrot slices on top of meat. Stir, and add paprika, turmeric, cumin, salt and pepper. If so desired, this is also the time to add garlic cloves, chickpeas, barberries, raisins, or other items.

Add ½ c. water and stir well. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to simmer for about 2 minutes, adding more water if necessary. Flatten the top of the meat mixture with a spatula.

Pour the rice over the meat mixture and flatten the top of the rice. Slowly add the boiling water, taking care not to let the rice mix with the meat mixture.

Let boil uncovered for 15 minutes. Then poke several holes in the plov with the handle of a wood spoon, to permit liquid from the bottom to rise evenly.

Reduce heat to very low and cover tightly. Let cook for approximately 25 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered, for 5 minutes.

Dish rice onto large platter and spoon the meat and vegetables on top. Garnish with roasted garlic.

Serves 6