

Döner Kebab

Recipe based on "Turkish Cookery," author unknown, Net Turistik Yayınlar AŞ, Istanbul, 1992, 2013 reprint

With comparison material from https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Cookbook:D%C3%B6ner_Kebab

A much more thorough discussion can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doner_kebab.

Chef Sivrioglu's recipe from <http://efendy.com.au/blog/2012/05/14/doner-kebab-real-deal-not-for-home-cooks/>

There are some mighty poor excuses for döner kebab recipes on the internet. Rather than hear about them, let me quote two better write-ups. Most internet recipes don't do justice to the **döner kebab** found in Turkey and in street shops in Germany (often staffed by Turks). The ones below are better.

In the USA, you will find Greek and Lebanese sandwich shops which sell gyros. (*See our recipe for gyros elsewhere on this website.*) Gyros and döner kebab sandwiches are prepared similarly. However, gyros is made from minced lamb, possibly with beef or veal added, with spicing mixed in, whereas . döner kebab is prepared from sliced lamb (or possibly veal).

Döner kebab (**döner kebab** in Turkish) literally means "rotating grilled meat" (any type of meat applies). The first döner kebabs were developed in Turkey by Turkish people. Authentic Turkish döner is made from lamb. Mostly beef or a mix of beef and lamb is used in the UK. There is also a marinated chicken version.

Historical Note from Wikipedia:

"Before taking its modern form, as mentioned in Ottoman travel books of the 18th century, the döner used to be a horizontal stack of meat rather than vertical, like the cağ kebabı of Erzurum. Grilling meat on horizontal skewers has an ancient history in the Eastern Mediterranean, but it is unknown when slices of meat, rather than chunks, were first used.

"In his own family biography, Iskender Efendi of 19th century Bursa writes that "he and his grandfather had the idea of roasting the lamb vertically rather than horizontally, and invented for that purpose a vertical mangal"... Since then, Hacı İskender is known as the inventor of Turkish döner kebab. With time, the meat took a different marinade, got leaner, and eventually took its modern shape."

A Fun Aside from (British) Wikipedia:

Doner Kebabs are colloquially known as "Dirty Doners" due to the large amounts of grease, the questionable content of the meat and the British love of alliteration for describing things.



Lamb Recipe

Sometimes the best recipes are found in the simplest books, such as those found at roadside cafes and gas stations in Europe and Asia Minor. This one is from a paperback book titled "Turkish Cookery, Wonderful Tastes from Turkey," author unknown, published by Net Turistik Yayinlar AŞ, Istanbul, 1992, in a 2013 reprint. On page 98, it offers:

- 10 kg lean lamb (from leg), boned
- 100 gm salt
- 50 gm pepper
- ½ liter onion juice
- juice of 1 lemon
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1 kg lamb fat
- 1 kg minced lamb meat
- 1 egg
- ½ cup milk



"The meat should be boned and the skin removed. Cut into large, thick slices, and pounded little with a mallet. Prepare a marinade of the onion juice, lemon juice, milk, olive oil, salt, and pepper. Soak the meat in the marinade for 12 hours.

"Soak the lamb fat in warm water. Mix the minced lamb with the egg.



"Skewer the meat, the lamb fat, and the lamb fat alternately, using larger pieces at the top. [Traditionally, the top should be lamb fat.] Put the skewer upright in front of the upright grill. The meat is broiled upright, turning slowly all the time.

"Cut thin slices of meat with a special, very long and sharp knife. Serve on top of flat bread called 'pide' [or pita or lavash] or on rice."

A picture inserted here shows typical 3/4" or so thick slices of lamb, alternating every so often with ¼" to ½" thick slices of lamb fat, stuck together with a thin layer of the minced lamb and egg mixture. Other presentations use lamb slices as thick as 1½" to as thin as ¼ inch. Meat is shaved off as it becomes a bit charred, falling into a small pan or scoop. The meat is then served on a pita, usually with chopped lettuce and tomato, peppers as desired, and tzatziki sauce (yogurt with chopped cucumber, garlic, and dill).



This obviously makes far more than any one family could consume. Perhaps scaling it down to a single 5-lb. leg of lamb would be good. The vertical roaster will be a problem. Perhaps you can use a horizontal rotisserie gas grill attachment, and brush the beast periodically with rendered lamb fat. If you baste with marinade, for

sanitary reasons use a fresh batch and not the material already used on the meat.

Veal Recipe

A similar interesting recipe is as follows, by Somer Sivrioglu, a Turkish chef who now owns a restaurant in Australia, from <http://efendy.com.au/blog/2012/05/14/doner-kebab-real-deal-not-for-home-cooks/>

“Best doner is made from leg of veal. If the veal is aged – over 1 years old, you can add a bit of lamb leg not exceeding 20% of the whole meat.

“Meat should be cut as thin and long as possible. Best type of doner in Turkey is called “yaprak doner” literally translating as “leaves of doner” not due to the thin slicing of the cooked meat, but for thin slicing of the veal to prepare the doner. You then need to pound the meat to make it even thinner.

“Marinate the thinly sliced meat in milk, vegetable oil, juice of onion and black pepper overnight in a fridge.

“Spike the meat on to a vertical doner skewer. On top of 8 layers place a thin layer of lamb mince to hold the meat together. Every 16 layers place lamb tail fat cut to the size of doner meat. The purpose of the mince is to bind the meat and fat together.

“Repeat the process until all meat is skewered, then add a thick layer of lamb tail fat on the top so that while the meat is cooking fat drips and keeps the outer layer moist.

“Once completed, tightly wrap it with a glad wrap and place it in a freezer overnight. This will make the whole meat tighter and give your doner a round shape.

Skewered Meat Preparation:

- Slice the meat (preferably lamb) into 1/8-inch – 3/8 inch thick slices, keeping them in order, marinating as described above. Skewer, wrap, chill, etc. as described.
- The street and café version is cooked on the rotisserie spit by incandescent radiant heat and the roasted, slightly-charred pieces are sliced from the skewer into a small hand-held catch pan periodically. If you do not have a rotisserie, you can cook the skewered meat over a low to medium gas grill burner, turning every so often, slicing off thin sections as the meat starts to char. This takes time, but is worth it for flavor. Keep the sliced-off meat in a pan on the low-heat side of the grill. As soon as enough is accumulated for a serving or two, serve.

Sauce

Kebab is never perfect without sauce or a dressing! Here is a sauce that goes well with kebab:

Iskender-style (Tzatzki) dressing

- 1 cup of unseasoned yogurt
- 1-3 cloves of garlic, chopped (amount depends on preference)
- pinch of salt
- 1 tsp. of basil
- 1-1½ tsp. of black and/or white pepper

Tzatzki Sauce

- 1 cup of unseasoned yogurt
- 1-3 cloves of garlic, chopped (amount depends on preference)
- pinch of salt
- ½ cucumber, grated
- 1 tsp. of dill (optional)

Optional seasoning for taste

- Lettuce & tomato
- Sumac
- Pickled cucumber
- green-, lemon-, or red pepper
- chile pepper/chili powder
- cayenne pepper
- Tabasco sauce

Pita Bread:

You can either “wrap” the fillings in a Tex-Mex flour tortilla or make it into a sandwich with pita bread. You can also use Lebanese lavash

Salad

A salad consisting of tomatoes, pickles, cucumbers, and Chinese cabbage with mayonnaise is probably the most common salad eaten with kebab in Europe. There are tons of variations, of course. You can also add chile peppers, jalapeño, red onions and such for the salad to fit your taste.

Serving: There are several ways and styles to serve döner. Here are a few:

- **Sandwich-style:** Slice the pita bread from the middle, then lay the salad, kebab and dressings like you would do with a hamburger.
- **Wrap-kebab:** The roll wrap for a wrap-kebab can be done using a large tortilla, the same technique as for burritos.
- **Kebab pizza:** Simply prepare a pizza and top it with kebab.
- **Kebab with rice:** Fill roughly over a half of a plate with kebab, and the rest with cooked rice. Dress as you would the sandwich style.
- **Kebab with chips (fries):** Same as *kebab with rice* except that the rice has been replaced by chips (a.k.a French fries).