

Iskender Kebab

Turkish · Main Course · Medium · 40 min total · Serves 4

Iskender kebab, from Bursa in northwest Turkey, layers thin döner-style meat over cubed pide, then adds hot tomato sauce, sizzling browned butter and cold garlic yogurt on the side.

Ingredients

- 1.5 lb beef sirloin or lamb leg (sliced paper-thin after partial freezing)
- 2 pide bread (cut into 1-inch cubes; sourdough is a fine stand-in)
- 1 can crushed tomatoes (about 14 oz (400 g))
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 4 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1 cup full-fat Greek yogurt (for the garlic yogurt)
- 3 cloves garlic (1 minced into the yogurt, 2 for the tomato sauce)
- 1 tbsp olive oil (for searing and the sauce)
- 1 tsp Aleppo pepper (pul biber) (stirred into the melted butter)
- 1 small green bell pepper (sliced, served alongside)
- 1.5 tsp kosher salt
- 0.5 tsp black pepper

Method

1. Wrap the beef in plastic and freeze it for 30 to 40 minutes until firm, then slice it as thinly as you can, about 1/16 inch (2 mm), against the grain. Season the slices with 1 tsp of the salt and the black pepper.
2. Stir the minced garlic clove and a pinch of salt into the Greek yogurt, then refrigerate it until serving.
3. Heat the olive oil in a saucepan over medium heat, stir in the tomato paste and cook for 1 minute, then add the crushed tomatoes, the 2 remaining garlic cloves and a pinch of salt. Simmer gently for about 10 minutes until slightly thickened and glossy, then keep it hot.
4. Heat a cast-iron or heavy skillet over high heat, about 450°F (230°C), and sear the meat in 2 or 3 batches for 1 to 2 minutes each, until browned at the edges and just cooked through. Do not crowd the pan, and keep the cooked meat warm on a plate.
5. Heat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Spread the pide cubes on a tray and warm them for about 5 minutes until hot and lightly crisp at the edges, then divide them among 4 warm plates.
6. Spoon the hot tomato sauce over the bread, then pile the seared meat on top so the sauce soaks into the bread.
7. Melt the butter with the Aleppo pepper in a small pan over medium heat, then cook until it foams and turns golden brown with a nutty smell, about 2 to 3 minutes. Pour it over the meat while it is still sizzling.
8. Serve immediately with the cold garlic yogurt and sliced green pepper on the side, so guests can spoon yogurt over the top as they eat.