

Balik Ekmek (Grilled Mackerel Sandwich)

Turkish · Main Course · Easy · 25 min total · Serves 4

Balik ekmek is the grilled fish sandwich sold at Istanbul's waterfront: mackerel fillets seared over high heat and tucked into a crusty roll with onion, lettuce, tomato and a squeeze of lemon.

Ingredients

- 1.25 lb mackerel fillets (about 4 fillets, skin on, pin bones removed)
- 4 crusty bread rolls (or split a baguette into 4 pieces)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice (plus wedges for serving)
- 1 small red onion (thinly sliced)
- 1 cup romaine lettuce (shredded)
- 1 medium ripe tomato (sliced)
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 0.5 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp sumac

Method

1. Pat the mackerel dry with paper towels, season both sides with the salt and black pepper, and rub the skin side with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil.
2. Heat a grill or cast-iron skillet over high heat, about 450°F (230°C).
3. Place the fillets skin-side down and cook without moving for 3 to 4 minutes, until the skin is crisp and charred in spots. Flip and cook 1 to 2 minutes more, until the flesh is opaque and reaches 145°F (63°C).
4. Split the rolls and toast the cut sides on the grill for about 1 minute, until golden.
5. Toss the onion and lettuce in a bowl with the lemon juice and a pinch of salt, which softens the raw onion slightly.
6. Tuck the lettuce, onion and tomato into each roll, add a fillet, sprinkle with sumac, squeeze over lemon, and serve immediately.