



ČELOW-KABĀB

ČELOW-KABĀB, a popular Persian dish which consists of cooked rice (*čelow*; see *berenj*) and a variety of broiled (*kabāb*, see below) mutton or veal (though less popular) and is served with butter, egg yolk, powdered sumac, raw onions, broiled tomatoes, and fresh sweet basil. It is served in the form of a mound with some butter buried inside. Different *čelow-kabābs* are usually named after the type of *kabāb* served with it (for examples see below). The drink traditionally served with *čelow-kabāb* is *dūg*, a beverage made with yogurt and water; in the past two decades, however, beverages such as Coca Cola have also become popular. According to Nāder Mīrzā (pp. 240-41), the people of Tabrīz used to eat *čelow-kabāb* with cotton candy (*pašmak*) and *sekanjabīn* (sweet-and-sour mint drink, q.v.).

The dish is not mentioned in the two culinary tracts of the 10th/16th century (ed. Afšār) and was probably created in the Qajar period. It was part of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's diet (*Āšpazbāši*, p. 8) and, according to Nāder Mīrzā (loc. cit.), a favorite dish of the people of Tabrīz, where it was served in restaurants (*čelowpaz-kāna*).

Čelow-kabāb-e solṭānī. Strips of the fillet of the best-quality meat are marinated overnight in a mixture of finely chopped onions and saffron, then gently beaten flat with the back of a kitchen knife, and finally broiled slowly on a skewer over charcoal fire. After the *kabāb* is cooked, it is placed on a platter or tray and pulled off the skewers with a piece of flat bread. The *kabāb* is then



brushed with butter, decorated with onion rings and fresh sweet basil, and served with rice, butter, sumac, and broiled tomatoes. This highly regarded dish is a specialty of Tabrīz restaurants. In some restaurants it includes both *kabāb-e barg* and *kabāb-e kūbīda*.

Čelow-kabāb-e barg. This *kabāb* is prepared like *kabāb-e solţānī* except that the meat pieces are cut into smaller chunks and saffron is omitted from the marinade.

Čelow-kabāb-e kūbīda. The ingredients consist of ground meat, grated onion, minced fresh sweet basil (only in a recent variety popular in Shiraz), salt, pepper, and egg yolk, which are mixed together and thoroughly kneaded. (In the past, the meat was placed in a bowl over steam and kneaded to melt the fat and mix it well with the meat.) Then, small portions of the mixture are placed around wide skewers, which are slightly dampened with water, and pressed with the fingers. The skewers are then placed over a hot charcoal grill, and the fire is fanned immediately, until the *kabāb* turns brownish; then the *kabāb* is left to cook until it is done. Finally the *kabāb* is placed between layers of flat bread to soak the fat and sprinkled with sumac and served with *čelow*. In another variety, *kabāb-e dīgī* (pot kabob), strips of the *kabāb* are broiled on a stove in a pot or a broiler tray. *Kabāb-e kūbīda* is also eaten with bread (*nān o kabāb*) instead of rice, and in recent years many fast-food restaurants specializing in *kabāb-e kūbīda* have opened in large cities.

Kabāb-e ḥosaynī. Chunks of meat (often marinated in a mixture of yogurt, saffron, grated onions, salt, and pepper), sheep tail fat (*donba*), small white onions, and green peppers are put on skewers made of pomegranate or fig branches or stainless steel, and then layers of tomato rings, chopped onion, and *kabāb* skewers are arranged in a large pot and simmered over low heat. An almost identical variety is *šīš-kabāb* (or *kabōb-e sīkī*, *kabāb-e kenja*), except that it is broiled over a low charcoal fire rather than in a pot.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ī. Afšār, ed., *Āšpazī-e dawra-ye šafawī*, Tehran, 1360 Š./1981.

Mīrzā ‘Alī-Akbar Khan Āšpazbāši, *Sofra-ye aṭ‘ema*, Tehran, 1353 Š./1974, pp. 8-9.

Nāder Mīrzā Qājār, *Tārīk-ejoğrāfiā-ye dār-al-salṭana-ye Tabrīz*, Tehran, 1323/1905.

N. Ramazani, *Persian Cooking*, New York, 1974, index.

Žiā’ Laškar Dāneš, *Kollīyāt-e Ḥakīm Sūrī*, Tehran, n.d., I, pp. 3, 40, 61, 68, 75.

(SĀjoğrā Bāzargān)