



KUFTA

KUFTA (*kufta* or *kufteh*), a popular Persian dish usually made of ground lamb or beef, and more recently, ground chicken or turkey in a mixture of herbs, spices, or other ingredients. There are two kinds of kufta: with rice and without. To make the first kind, kufta rice is kneaded with ground meat, finely chopped herbs, usually parsley, scallion, and dill, and salt and sometimes pepper in a bowl. In kufta sabzi (vegetable kufta), tarragon and sweet fennel could be also added. The mixture is shaped like ping-pong balls in small and large sizes. These are placed in a pot already filled with water, salt, dried plums, and fried onions, and cooked over a low heat. The dish is usually served with bread. Using the right amount of ingredients is the key in making the desirable kufta since a slight mistake can throw off the required consistency and result in the falling apart of the meatball during the cooking process. To prevent this, ingredients like flour or raw eggs are usually added to the mixture to achieve the ideal consistency. The bigger the size of the kufta, the more difficult it becomes to save it from falling apart while cooking. The large kufta is usually stuffed with fried onion, dried plums, walnuts, almonds, a hard-boiled egg, and/or raisins. To show their talent and surprise guests, skilled chefs may stuff a whole pigeon or young chicken in the middle of the kufta.

The varieties of kufta are designated either by their distinctive ingredient, e.g., kufta sabzi (vegetable kufta), kufta berenji (rice kufta), kufta šebet (dill kufta), kufta somāq (sumac kufta), kufta noḳodči (chick pea kufta), and kufta noḳod (pea kufta), or by their size, as in kufta riza or sargonješki (tiny or sparrow-



head kufta), or kufta tabrizi, and kufta mo'allā', which are usually large. Kuftas may be divided also according to their distinctive taste; there are sour kuftas which are cooked in sour sauces or juices, like kufta somāq, sour-sweet kufta with sour and sweet dressings, such as grape syrup, sugar, and lemon juice, like kufta noḳodči, and kuftas with no additional sauce, like kufta tabrizi (following the fashion of the people of Tabriz), and kufta bāqāli (fava bean kufta).

Musyū Rišār Khan Mo'addeb-al-molk, (Jules Richard, 1816-91), the French adventurer and the author of a book on Persian cuisine who eventually became a Persian civil servant, cites seven kinds of kufta in his *Ṭabḳ-e irāni o farangi o širinipazi* (Persian & Western Cooking and Pastry Making), the most important of which are kufta berenji, kufta qelqeli (tiny ball kufta), kufta tabrizi, and kufta noḳodči. (Musyū Rišār Khan, pp. 113-117). Nur-Allāh, the chef of the Safavid Shah 'Abbās the Great, in *Āšpazi-e dawra-ye šafawi* (Cooking in the Safavid Period, p. 21), mentions kufta riza, kufta barra (lamb kufta), and kufta bozorg (large kufta).

Recently, with the introduction of other nations' dishes, names of foreign kuftas such as kufta curry, kufta meygu (shrimp kufta) and meat loaf kufta also appear in new Iranian cookbooks (Daryābandari, vol. II, p. 1107).

Kufta is referred to as *konda* in the *Divān* of [Boshāq-e Aṭ'ema](#) (p. 182), and is known as *kefta* in the Mediterranean regions of Greece, Lebanon, and Syria. Indigenous to the areas, the famous falafel is a meatless deep-fried kind of the kufta made with chickpea flour and vegetables.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Nur-Allāh Āšpaz, *Āšpazi-e dawra-ye šafawi*, ed. Iraj Afšār, 1st ed., Tehran, 1981.

Boshāq-e Aṭ'ema, Abu Eshāq Ḥallāj Širāzi, *Divān-e Aṭ'ema*, 1st ed., ed. Abul Žiā' Tawfiq, 1303 AH/1808.

N. Daryābandari, *Ketāb-e mostaṭāb-e āšpazi: az sir tā piyāz*, vol. II, 1st ed., Tehran, 2001.

R. Montazami, *Honar-e āšpazi*, 39th ed., Tehran, 2001.

Musiu Rišār Khan Mo'addeb-al-molk, *Ṭabḳ-e irāni o farangi o širinipazi*, Tehran, 1932, 1st ed., Tehran, 1932.

See also:

N. Batmanglij, *Food of Life*, Washington, D.C., 1984.

M. R. Ghanoonparvar, *Persian Cuisine I*, Lexington, KY, 1982.

N. Ramazani, *Persian Cooking: A Table of Exotic Delights*, Charlottesville, VA, 1982.