



Savory Middle Eastern KIBBEH

By Rae Harris, *BFP Staff Writer*

Kibbeh (or *kubba*) has been called the Middle Eastern meatball or meatloaf, depending whom you ask. It comes from the Arabic word meaning “to form a ball,” and is essentially deep-fried meat-stuffed meat (what’s not to love?). You can also bake it in a pan or serve it raw, like steak tartare. Make your own *kibbeh* at home with our recipe, featuring mint leaves in the dough for an additional nod to its Middle Eastern roots.

Ingredients

Meat Dough:

1 ½ lbs (700 g) ground beef
2 cups bulgur wheat
1 large onion, quartered
1 tsp cumin
½ tsp cinnamon
½ cup mint leaves
Salt and pepper to taste
Water

Filling:

½ lb (230 g) ground beef
½ cup toasted pine nuts
1 medium onion, diced
1 Tbsp olive oil
1 tsp cumin
½ tsp cinnamon
Salt and pepper to taste
Vegetable oil (for frying)

Instructions

To make the dough:

Cover a mesh strainer with a cheesecloth or towel and put bulgur wheat inside. Place over a bowl filled with water (enough to submerge the sieve in the water) and soak for 30 minutes. Squeeze excess water from wheat. Add wheat, mint and onion to a food processor and blend until smooth. Add beef and spices and blend until a paste forms. Set aside, covered, while you make the filling.

To make the filling:

In a large skillet, heat olive oil. Add onion and sauté until translucent. Add ground beef and spices and cook until beef is browned. Remove from heat and stir in pine nuts.

To assemble:

With wet hands, take a small handful of meat dough and form into a ball. Using your fingers, poke a hole in the middle and push dough up the sides, forming a cone shape. Place a spoonful of filling inside the hole and pinch to seal, creating the shape of an American football. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Repeat until you’ve used all the ingredients, re-wetting your hands between *kibbeh*.

To fry:

Place vegetable oil (enough to cover the *kibbeh*) in a large soup pot and heat to 350°F (180°C). Fry a couple *kibbeh* at a time until brown, about 5–10 minutes. Remove from oil and place on a napkin-lined baking sheet to drain. Serve warm with yogurt sauce or *labneh* cheese and a squeeze of fresh lemon.