Alumni

Home-Cook Hacks from Christopher Kimball

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Christopher Kimball (Connie Miller / CB Creatives)

In his new cookbook, *Milk Street: Tuesday Nights*, Christopher Kimball ’73CC — chef, television host, and bow-tie enthusiast — relies on global flavors to keep cooking simple and interesting. We asked him to share a recipe and his philosophy on weeknight meals.

What's one thing you want home chefs to know?

To look for inspiration outside of classic American or European cooking. Those cuisines use fairly bland ingredients like dairy, meat, and potatoes and then rely on a lot of time and technique to slowly build flavors. But you'll find that in most of the world, flavor is built with ingredients, not time. The actual cooking process is not as important as your raw materials.

What are some of your go-to "raw materials"?

All kinds of herbs, chiles, ginger, scallions, lemongrass, smoked meats, and fish. And instead of a sprinkling of herbs, I use handfuls!

What do you always keep in your pantry?

Certain staples bring big flavors to simple foods. I always have harissa, tahini, pomegranate molasses, salsas, fermented sauces like gochujang, and vinegars. And all kinds of spices! If you use a spice rub on a pork tenderloin, it's done in eight minutes and you don't need to bother with a fussy pan sauce.

Recipe: Pistachio-Mint Beef Kofta



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Start to Finish: 35 minutes | Servings: 4

- 1 cup roasted and salted pistachio meats (shelled)
- 2½ teaspoons dried mint
- 1½ pounds 85 percent lean ground beef
- 5 tablespoons chopped fresh dill, divided
- 4 tablespoons chopped fresh mint, divided
- 4 medium garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- ¾ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 1 large egg plus 2 large egg yolks, beaten
- 1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt

- 2 tablespoons grapeseed or other neutral oil

Pistachios — lots of them — give these beef kofta a rich, toasty flavor that's balanced by the sweetness of dried mint and the grassiness of fresh dill. Most supermarkets sell shelled pistachios that are already toasted and salted. If you start with raw ones, toast them in a 400°F oven for about 8 minutes, stirring once, and increase the salt in the meat mixture by 1/4 teaspoon. Serve with shredded romaine lettuce, thinly sliced red onion, and warmed flatbreads.

Don't worry about overmixing the beef. Processing for a full minute yields a mixture with a spreadable consistency that, when cooked, has a texture that's pleasantly springy, yet soft and tender.

In a food processor, pulse the pistachios and dried mint until the nuts are coarsely chopped, about 3 pulses. Set aside 2 tablespoons, then process the remaining mixture until finely ground, about 20 seconds.

Add the beef, 3 tablespoons of the dill, 1 tablespoon of fresh mint, the garlic, allspice, cayenne, 1.5 teaspoons salt, and 3/5 teaspoon pepper. Process until well combined, 1 to 1½ minutes, frequently scraping the bowl. Add the eggs and process until the mixture has a spreadable, sticky consistency, about 1 minute.

Shape into 12 patties, each about 1/2 inch thick. Place on a large plate, cover, and refrigerate for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, stir together the yogurt, the remaining 2 tablespoons dill, the remaining 3 tablespoons fresh mint, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Set aside.

In a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil until shimmering. Add half of the patties in a single layer and cook, turning once, until golden brown on both sides, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a platter and tent with foil. Repeat with the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and patties. Sprinkle the reserved pistachios over the patties and serve with yogurt sauce.

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