



Turkish Tuna 'Meatballs' (Balık Köftesi)

I learnt to make Turkish köfte from my friend Somer Sivrioglu. Traditionally he makes them with a combination of lamb and beef, but his slapping technique, and the secret ingredient of semolina, work just as well for making fishballs as they do for meatballs. Tuna echoes the colour of meat köfte and doesn't really taste 'fishy', in fact if you didn't know these were made with seafood, you may just think they're regular köfte. This recipe is a great way to use up tuna offcuts from making sushi or other dishes as the food processor breaks up any sinew.

Serves 2 (makes 8 pieces)

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ tablespoons fresh breadcrumbs (7g)
- 1½ tablespoons cold water (30ml)
- 200g tuna steak or offcuts (7oz)
- ½ brown onion, peeled
- 1 small clove garlic, crushed
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt flakes
- ¼ teaspoon ground pimento (all spice)
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon ground Aleppo pepper
- ½ lightly beaten egg
- 1 teaspoon fine semolina
- Extra virgin olive oil, for brushing
- White Bean & Tahini Salad (Piyaz), for serving



METHOD

1. Put breadcrumbs and water in a large mixing bowl and set aside.
2. Meanwhile, place tuna in a food processor and process into a paste. Transfer to the mixing bowl.
3. Grate in the onion.
4. Add garlic, cumin, salt, pimento, black pepper, Aleppo pepper, egg and semolina.
5. Knead well with wet hands for 10 minutes or so, slapping it into the bowl to bring it together into a smooth paste that you can pull together into a ball.
6. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least an hour or so.
7. Preheat a barbecue or char-grill pan over high heat.
8. Meanwhile, with moistened fingers, divide the fish mixture into 8 pieces. Roll each one into a ball then lay it across the fingers of one hand and press with the fingers of the other hand to form a patty about 1-cm thick with 3 indentations along each side from your fingers.
9. Brush with oil.
10. Cook patties for 2-4 minutes each side, until well coloured; they'll take a bit longer in a char-grill pan than on a barbecue.
11. Serve with White Bean & Tahini Salad.