

Epicure

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Succulence on a Skewer

by Mark Spivak

THE RESTAURANT: Leila Restaurant, 120 S. Dixie Highway, West Palm Beach (561-659-7373)

THE CHEF: Alex Awad

THE DISH: Classic Lamb Kebab

THE DISH ON THE DISH: A lamb strip loin is cut into cubes, which are rubbed with chopped onions and a house blend of seven spices. After marinating for 24 hours, the lamb cubes are skewered in combination with hunks of onion and sweet red pepper. The kebabs are grilled to order, and served with couscous and grilled vegetables.

THE DISH ON THE CHEF: A self-taught chef, Awad was working as a jeweler when his cousin, Roy Assad, decided to open Leila. Assad persuaded Awad to transfer the skills he had acquired in his home kitchen to the restaurant. "If you come to my house," says Awad, "you will be treated like a king. It's the same thing at Leila. We want you to leave with a smile on your face."



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THE RECIPE:

INGREDIENTS: 2 pounds lamb strip loin, cut into 1 ½ inch cubes; 10 shallots, halved; 1 large red bell pepper, cut into 1 ½-inch pieces; 10 skewers (wooden is fine).

Marinade - ¾ teaspoon sea salt or to taste; ¾ teaspoon freshly ground allspice; 1/8 teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper; ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon; 1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg; ¼ of a large onion (finely minced in the food processor); 2 cups olive oil

DIRECTIONS: Marinade - Mix the dry ingredients together and dry rub the lamb until well coated. Combine the onion and olive oil, and pour over the spice-rubbed lamb, mix well to combine. Let marinade for up to 10 hours in a refrigerated space.

Remove lamb from marinade. Alternating lamb cube, half of shallot, and red bell pepper, and thread 4 pieces of each onto a skewer. Cook over a hot grill to desired temperature.