

Hot Summer Nights in Spain

August 2009

Menu:

Grilled Bread with Romesco Sauce and Manchego Cheese
Spanish Smoked Paprika Lamb Meatballs
Toasted Pearl Couscous Salad with Saffron, Almonds, Oranges & Herbs
Arugula, Almond and Cabrales Salad with Warm Fig Dressing

Grilled Bread with Romesco Sauce and Manchego Cheese

Serves about 6

2 red bell peppers
2 roma tomatoes, halved and seeded
4 garlic cloves
1/2 cup whole almonds, with skin on
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/4 cup sherry wine vinegar
1/4 cup olive oil, plus more as needed
salt and pepper
1 loaf baguette or ciabatta, cut in half lengthwise
6 oz manchego cheese, shaved

*** Preparation ****

Place the peppers directly over a gas flame and roast, turning as needed, until all sides are blackened. Remove from burner and place into a bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and let sit for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat a grill pan over high heat. Toss the tomatoes in olive oil. Grill tomatoes until charred in some places. Place the grilled tomatoes into a blender or food processor.

Rub the black skins off the peppers and remove the stems and seeds. (It's OK if some black is left on the peppers.) Add the pepper flesh to the tomatoes. Add the nuts, garlic, paprika, vinegar, olive oil and a large pinch of salt. Blend until smooth. Taste and season with more salt and pepper as needed.

Brush the bread with olive oil and grill until very crispy. Sprinkle the bread with salt and pepper when it comes off the grill.

Top the bread with shaved manchego cheese and a dollop of the romesco sauce.

Spanish Smoked Paprika Meatballs with Charred Oranges

Serves 6

2 lbs ground lamb
1/4 cup grated white onion
1 garlic clove, grated
1 tablespoons smoked paprika, (sweet or spicy)
1 orange, zest
1/2 cup kalamata olives, chopped
1 tsp salt
1 tsp ground black pepper
2 oranges
1/2 cup chopped parsley

*** Preparation ****

Heat a grill pan over high heat.

In a large bowl, combine the lamb, onion, garlic, paprika, olives, orange zest, salt and pepper. Mix together and create golf-ball-sized meatballs. Place on the hot grill pan and grill until well-marked on all sides and just cooked through. (If using an outdoor grill, thread the balls onto skewers for easy grilling OR make small patties instead of meatballs.)

Remove the meatballs from the grill. Cut the oranges in quarters and rub the flesh with olive oil. Grill until well-marked. Squeeze the freshly grilled oranges over the hot meatballs. Top with chopped parsley.

Serve immediately.



Toasted Pearl Couscous with Saffron, Almonds, Oranges

Serves 4-6

olive oil

1 1/2 cups pearl couscous, (also known as Israeli Couscous)

large pinch saffron

4 cups chicken stock, as needed

1/2 cup toasted almond slices

1/2 cup roughly chopped parsley

1 oranges, zested

salt and pepper

***** Preparation ******

Heat a saute pan over medium-high heat. Add olive oil to lightly coat the bottom of the pan. Add the couscous and the saffron. Cook for a few minutes, stirring often, until pasta is toasted.

Meanwhile, bring the chicken stock to a simmer in another pot.

Add about 2 cups of the chicken stock, reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered (without stirring) until the liquid is mostly absorbed and pasta is tender. Add more stock as needed. Remove from heat.

Stir in the almonds, parsley, orange zest and season well with salt and pepper. Drizzle with olive oil just before serving.

Serve hot immediately!



Arugula, Almond & Cabrales Salad with Warm Fig Dressing

Serves 4

for the dressing:

1 cup dried figs, halved
1 orange, zested and juiced
1/3 cup Sherry vinegar
2 tbl honey
1/2 cup olive oil
salt and pepper

for the salad:

4 cups baby arugula leaves
1/2 cup toasted almonds, slices or slivers
1/2 cup crumbled Cabrales cheese, or other blue cheese
8 fresh figs, quartered, optional

***** Preparation ******

For the dressing:

In a small pot, combine the figs, orange, sherry vinegar and honey. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for about 5 minutes until figs are very soft. Pour mixture into a blender. Blend until smooth, adding the olive oil as you go. Season with salt and pepper. Taste and add a splash more vinegar if needed.

(NOTE: If making ahead, rewarm the dressing in a pot before tossing with the salad.)

For the salad:

In a large bowl, combine the arugula, almonds, cheese and figs (if using). Toss gently with the dressing.

Serve immediately.