

Makes: 24–30 meatballs
Prep: 20 minutes plus 10 minutes of refrigeration
Cooking: 20 minutes

MEATBALLS

1 large onion, peeled and quartered
1½ cups (180 g) raw pistachio kernels (see note)
½ cup (15 g) fresh plain bread crumbs
3 cups (250 g) chopped fresh parsley
1 cup (85 g) chopped fresh tarragon
1 cup (85 g) chopped fresh cilantro
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon ground cumin
2 teaspoons sea salt
2 lb (900 g) ground turkey thighs, lamb, or deboned fish fillets
1 egg

½ cup oil to brush meatballs

GLAZE

1 cup (240 ml) pomegranate molasses*
⅓ cup (80 ml) grape molasses*
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

GARNISH

1 cup (150 g) pomegranate arils

PISTACHIO + POMEGRANATE MEATBALLS

Years ago I was inspired by a sixteenth-century Persian cookbook to create this recipe and combine a mixture of pomegranate and grape molasses for the sauce. To my surprise, last year in Kerman, where they have the best of both pomegranates and pistachios, a local cook served me pistachio meatballs with a pomegranate sauce.

1. To make the meatballs: Place all the ingredients, except the ground turkey and egg, in a food processor and pulse until you have a grainy paste. Transfer to a large mixing bowl and add the turkey and egg. Lightly knead with your hands for a few minutes (do not over-mix). Cover and chill in the fridge for at least 10 minutes or up to 24 hours.
2. Preheat the oven to 450°F (230°C). Generously oil a wide, non-reactive baking dish, large enough to fit 24 meatballs, (about 12 x 14 in/30 x 35 cm) and set aside.
3. Remove the turkey paste from the fridge and shape into walnut-sized balls (about 1½ tablespoons each) using an ice-cream scoop. Place the meatballs in the baking dish and brush well with oil. Bake in the oven for 5 to 15 minute (depending on your oven).
4. Meanwhile, in another mixing bowl, combine all the ingredients for the glaze.
5. Spoon the glaze over the meatballs and bake for another 5 minutes to infuse them with the flavor of pomegranate.
6. Garnish with the pomegranate arils and serve warm with the sauce. *Nush-e joon!*

VEGETARIAN VARIATION

For a vegetarian version, in step 1, replace the meat with cooked quinoa. To cook the quinoa: Place 2 cups quinoa (rinsed thoroughly) and 3 cups water in a medium saucepan, stir gently and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook for 20 minutes. In step 1, place all the ingredients for the meatballs, increasing number of eggs to 3, and the cooked quinoa in a food processor and pulse until you have a grainy paste.