DIRECT · MEDIUM

Skewered Sardines al Espeto on the Kamado

The icon of the Mediterranean summer at home: fresh sardines with coarse salt, roasted by the side heat of the kamado's embers without touching the grate. Charred skin, juicy flesh, bread and lemon.



PREP	COOK	SERVINGS	TEMPERATURE
25 min	12 min	4	250 °C

Ingredients

- **16 ud** medium fresh sardines, whole
- **3 cda** extra virgin olive oil
- **1 pizca** flaky salt, to finish
- **1 ud** loaf of rustic bread, to serve
- **4 cda** coarse sea salt
- **2 ud** lemons, in wedges
- **1 pizca** freshly ground black pepper
- **3 ud** ripe tomatoes, for a salad (optional)

Method

1 SALT THE SARDINES

Choose shiny sardines with clear eyes, firm to the touch: freshness is everything here. Do not gut or scale them; rinse under cold water and pat dry carefully. Scatter them generously with coarse sea salt on both sides and rest them 15 minutes on a rack, so the salt seasons without drying the flesh.

2 EMBERS TO ONE SIDE

Light the kamado and, once the charcoal is well lit, push all the embers to one side with a poker or rake, leaving the other half clear. Drop a couple of olive-wood chunks onto the coals to perfume the smoke. You will work with the lid open: you are not after a closed, stable dome but the intense radiant heat of the ember bed, around 250 °C at the face of the fire.

3 LOAD THE BASKET

Lightly brush the sardines with olive oil and lay 6-8 of them in a grilling basket, aligned and snug, all facing the same way. The basket replaces the espetero's cane: it keeps the fish flat and lets you turn every piece at once without the skin sticking or tearing, which is exactly what happens when they sit loose on the grate.

4 ROAST BY THE SIDE HEAT

Set the basket at the edge of the grate, beside the ember pile but not over the direct fire, so the sardines take the heat from the side. Roast 4-5 minutes without moving them, until the skin on the exposed side chars and the fat starts to sizzle. If a flare-up climbs, pull the basket aside for a few seconds: controlled dripping is part of the flavour, constant flames are not.

5 FLIP AND CHAR

Flip the whole basket and roast the second side another 3-4 minutes, until the skin is toasted and the flesh looks opaque next to the bone. The sardines are ready when the dorsal fin pulls away easily and the flesh lifts off the spine; 10-12 minutes in total. Overshoot and this lean fish dries out fast, so pull them the moment they set.

6 SERVE RIGHT AWAY

Lift the sardines from the basket carefully and slide them onto a warm platter. Finish with a thread of olive oil, flaky salt, pepper and lemon wedges. Serve them steaming with rustic bread, ideally dipped in their juices, and a simple tomato salad. Eat them with your fingers, pulling the head to draw out the whole backbone, just like at any beach shack.

Editor's tips

- Freshness rules: use day-boat sardines with bright eyes and firm flesh. A soft or strong-smelling sardine is not saved by any fire.
- Never put it over the direct fire. The espeto roasts from the side: if the fat drips onto the coals and ignites, the black smoke turns the fish bitter.
- If your sardines vary in size, group them by gauge in separate baskets or batches: small ones cook in 7-8 minutes, large ones need a couple more.

Gear for this recipe

Big Green Egg Large

The Big Green Egg Large is the ideal base for bringing the espeto home: its ceramic mass builds a stable, powerful ember bed that, pushed to one side with the lid open, delivers exactly the lateral radiant heat sardines want. The Large size leaves plenty of room to bank the fire to one half and roast batch after batch without losing intensity.

mikamado.es/en/kamados/big-green-egg-large

Smokey Olive Wood Olive Wood Chunks 1.5 kg

The aroma that defines a Málaga espeto comes from olive wood, and these chunks bring it to the kamado. A couple of pieces over the embers add a mild, sweetish, very Mediterranean smoke, perfect for a delicate oily fish like sardine without masking it. It is the touch that ties the recipe to the coast, far gentler than intense smoking woods such as hickory.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/smokey-olive-wood-olive-chunks-1-5kg

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Carboext 100% Holm Oak Lump Charcoal, 15 kg Sack

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/carboext-encina-15kg

Weber Fish & Vegetable Basket 6471, stainless steel 46 × 28 cm

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/weber-cesta-pescado-verduras-46x28

Weber Charcoal Rake (7649)

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/weber-rastrillo-carbon-7649

Full recipe at: mikamado.es/en/recetas/sardinas-espeto-kamado

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