DIRECT · EASY

Pork Neck Shashlik on the Kamado, Onion Marinade

The skewer of the Russian-speaking world, cooked as I make it on my Big Green Egg Large: pork neck in 3 cm cubes, a grated onion marinade with not a drop of vinegar, and twenty minutes of steady direct fire.



PREP	COOK	SERVINGS	TEMPERATURE
30 min	20 min	6	220 °C

Ingredients

- **1.5 kg** pork neck (collar), in 3 cm cubes
- **18 g** coarse salt
- **1 cdta** ground coriander seed
- **2 cda** extra virgin olive oil
- **1 cda** sumac (or sweet Vera paprika)
- **1 ud** lemon, cut into wedges
- **700 g** white onion for the marinade
- **1.5 cdta** black peppercorns, coarsely crushed
- **3 ud** bay leaves
- **2 ud** red onions, thinly sliced into rings, to serve
- **1 puñado** fresh parsley and dill, chopped
- **6 ud** lavash or pita breads, to serve

Method

1 CUT THE PORK NECK

Ask for a whole piece of pork neck with its seam of fat running through it, and cut it into 3 cm cubes. Smaller and they dry out before they colour; larger and they scorch outside without reaching the centre. Keep the marbling and remove only the tough white sinew. From 1.5 kg you get around 45 cubes, six generous skewers.

2 GRATE THE ONION

Grate the white onion on the coarse side of a box grater and collect pulp and juice in a large bowl. Do not use a blender: the fine purée clings to the meat and carbonises on the fire. Add the salt, the crushed peppercorns, the ground coriander and the bay leaves torn in half, and stir well.

3 MARINATE COLD

Mix the cubes into the onion until they are coated on every face, press the meat down to push out the air and cover. Fridge, 12 to 24 hours. No vinegar, lemon or wine: strong acid tightens the fibres and leaves the pork dry. Stir once halfway through and take the meat out 30 minutes before it goes on the fire.

4 LIGHT THE KAMADO

Light the kamado with two or three firelighters spread across the charcoal; Orework's Spanish holm oak burns with a short flame and a bed that lasts. Leave the dome open for ten minutes, close it with both vents wide and settle at 220 °C. Wait until the smoke runs clean and almost invisible before anything goes on.

5 THREAD THE SKEWERS

Lift the cubes out and wipe off every scrap of onion clinging to them: on the fire it carbonises and turns bitter. Thread six or seven cubes per skewer, alternating the fattier faces, snug against each other but not crushed. Set the AWCIGG skewer rests on the grate so the skewers sit raised, with the meat clear of the iron.

6 GRILL AND TURN

Lay the skewers on the rests and close the dome. Every two or three minutes give them a quarter turn with long tongs, the curved Rösle ones work well, always holding them by the handle. Eighteen to twenty minutes in total. If dripping fat sets off a flare-up, close the dome for a few seconds: it dies on its own, no water needed.

7 PROBE THE CENTRE

At the sixteen-minute mark, probe the largest cube from the side with an instant thermometer such as the Lavatools Javelin PRO Duo, aiming for the centre and staying off the metal skewer, which runs far hotter. Between 71 and 75 °C the neck is juicy and the fat has rendered. If it is short, give it two more minutes and probe again.

8 REST AND SERVE

Move the skewers to a platter, tent them loosely with foil and rest for five minutes: the meat settles its juices and stops shedding them at the first bite. Meanwhile dress the red onion rings with the sumac and the herbs. Serve the cubes over warm lavash, with the lemon wedges alongside.

Editor's tips

- Vinegar is the most repeated mistake in shashlik: it tightens the surface of the meat and leaves a sour undertone, while grated onion softens gently and perfumes without masking the pork.
- If you cannot find neck, shoulder and belly both work well; loin does not, because without marbling it dries out before the surface has a chance to colour.
- Use flat or square-section skewers: round ones spin freely and the cubes end up with the same face to the fire every time.
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Bank the charcoal so that a quarter of the firebox holds less of it: that gentler zone gives you somewhere to move a skewer that is colouring too fast.

Gear for this recipe

Big Green Egg Large

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

Orework Spanish Holm Oak Charcoal 15 kg

Twenty minutes of direct fire at 220 °C with a bed that never sags: that is what decides this shashlik. Orework's Spanish holm oak charcoal burns with a short flame and little ash, so the kamado's ceramic loads up with heat and gives it back steadily while you turn the six skewers. Being dense holm oak, the embers do not cake or force you to rake them with the meat already on, and the smoke runs clean from the start.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/orework-encina-espanola-15kg

AWCIGG Skewer Set with Stands

Pork neck cubes are heavy and they roll; if the skewer rests on the grate, the meat sticks on one face and scorches on another. The AWCIGG skewer-and-rack set holds the skewers a few centimetres above the grill: every quarter turn comes clean, the fat drips away from the hottest spot, and all four faces of each cube take the same heat across the eighteen minutes of the cook.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/awcigg-brochetas-soportes-set

Lavatools Javelin PRO Duo instant-read thermometer

Pork neck forgives very little on the high side: past 80 °C the marbling has already rendered away and the cube turns dry. At the sixteen-minute mark you want to probe the biggest cube and actually read it, not guess. The Lavatools Javelin PRO Duo answers in a couple of seconds with the dome open, just enough time to confirm you are between 71 and 75 °C and pull the skewers before you overshoot.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/lavatools-javelin-pro-duo

Weber Firelighter Cubes (17612): 48 odourless blocks

An onion marinade is delicate, and any trace of lighter fluid clings straight to the pork. Weber firelighters are odourless and catch without black smoke: spread two or three across the charcoal, leave the dome open for ten minutes and the kamado climbs to 220 °C with the smoke already clean. The meat then goes on when it should, free of the chemical undertone that ruins a skewer marinated for twenty-four hours.

mikamado.es/en/accesorios/weber-pastillas-encendido-48

Full recipe at: mikamado.es/en/recetas/shashlik-cerdo-cuello-kamado

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