

Greek Gyros

The Gyro is a Greek street dish that many Americans favor. You pronounce it yee-roh. A gyro is roasted meat served in a pita, usually with tomato, onion, and tzatziki, a cold, creamy sauce made from yogurt, cucumber, garlic, and spices.

Spiced gyro meat is roasted on a rotating vertical rotisserie and sliced off in thin, crispy shavings as it cooks. In Greece, gyros are made predominantly of pork; in America, it is a blend of lamb and beef. If lamb is not available, you can still make superb gyros with all beef. Lamb is not critical, but it rounds out the flavor in gyro meat recipes. It is delicious! I highly recommend using it in equal parts with beef if you can get it. If red meat is not your favorite, try a chicken gyros recipe.

The key to homemade gyros is in the flavor and tenderness of the meat. You want to cook it at a lower temperature, so it stays juicy and does not dry out. Then slice it thinly and crisp the edges. You will be surprised by the similarity in taste to that of your favorite gyro establishments.

Making gyro meat at home is more like making a meatloaf unless you own a rotisserie. This method is for adventurous cooks with average kitchens wanting to make a gyro without the extra equipment. You process the ground lamb, beef, or meat combo in a food processor to create a puree or paste, which will then be baked, sliced, and seared. One of the most notable things about gyro meat is that it is thinly sliced. Aim for 1/8" or thinner. This is much more easily accomplished once the meat is cool. You will achieve a crisp outer layer like a rotisserie gyro by searing the meat.

Tzatziki (tuh-zee-kee) sauce is almost as essential to the Gyro as the meat. Tzatziki is a creamy cucumber yogurt dip or sauce made from simple ingredients, including strained yogurt (or Greek yogurt), cucumbers, garlic, and sometimes fresh herbs such as dill or mint. The sauce is simple and only takes minutes to make it. I like to use English cucumbers here because they are seedless, plus the skin is thin, so you do not have to peel them. If using regular cucumbers with waxy skin, peel them completely and discard the large seeds. Tzatziki needs to sit in the fridge for at least an hour before serving; ideally, it should rest overnight. The flavors meld and get better as it sits.

You will want to buy or make the soft, thick Greek pita bread for gyro sandwiches. Flatbread can be substituted. Greek pita bread is an effortless dish to prepare. Greek pita is a plain, non-enriched dough left to proof and then pan-fried in a skillet until fluffy and golden brown. If you wonder if it is worth making pita bread at home, my answer is yes!

Arrange warm meat slices, slivered raw onion, sliced tomatoes, and tzatziki sauce on warm pita bread. Fold the pita bread in half (like a taco) and enjoy.

An outstanding gyro balances hot and cold ingredients with Mediterranean flavors. If you experience gyro cravings, you are in luck and can now enjoy them without having to leave the house! Homemade Greek gyros are easy to make at home. You'll see that you can re-create these yummy Mediterranean delights in your own kitchen!