



From the Kitchen of Executive Chef Jessica VanRoo

Sicilian Chicken and Vegetable Skewers with Pesto Farro

Serves 4

461 calories per serving

Description from Living Well UCI Health Blog: www.ucihealth.org/blog

Grilling is a delicious, low-cal, low-fuss method for preparing meats. It's also an easy way to fit in your vegetables. Outdoor grilling not only allows any excess fat to drip right through the grates, it helps keep your kitchen cool during the hottest days and evenings of spring, summer and fall!

Chicken is an excellent source of lean protein. It's the zucchini that really pumps up this recipe's mental health booster effect.

This super-vegetable delivers lots of magnesium, a mineral the brain needs to regulate mood, calm the nervous system and ease symptoms of depression. It also aids in sleep by working with melatonin, a hormone that helps control your body clock and sleep cycles.

In addition, zucchini is rich in potassium, B vitamins, dietary fiber and antioxidants. Potassium increases blood flow to the brain, which can help with the brain fog often associated with depression. One cup of zucchini also has 14% of the body's daily need for vitamin B6 – an important depression lifter. Layer in onions and sweet peppers and you add antioxidants, more minerals and vitamins. Basil and lemon deliver a zesty kick.

Farro is another high-protein, high-fiber ancient grain, a type of whole-grain wheat that features prominently in Mediterranean diets and is a healthier alternative to white rice or other refined grains. It, too, is an excellent source of nutrients like magnesium and zinc, which is essential for a healthy immune system and wound healing. The B vitamins found in farro also help to break down and convert the grain into energy, as well as keep your hair, skin and eyes healthy!

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Chicken skewers

- 1 lb chicken breast, cut into small bite-size pieces
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large lemon, zested and juiced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon granulated garlic
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch squares
- 1 red onion, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 zucchini, cut into ½-inch rounds
- Lemon, cut into wedges for serving

Filling

- 1 cup farro, rinsed
- 3 tablespoons homemade or store-bought pesto



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Instructions

1. Combine chicken with olive oil, lemon juice, lemon zest, oregano, basil, garlic, salt and pepper.
2. Mix well, set aside to marinate for 20 minutes.
3. Skewer vegetables and chicken.
4. Preheat grill to medium-high, about 400 degrees.
5. Place skewers on grill, rotating frequently for 10-15 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through (165 degrees).
6. Alternately, skewers can be baked in a 400-degree oven for 15 minutes, or until the chicken reaches 165 degrees.

For farro:

1. Bring 4 cups of water to a boil and place farro in water.
2. Reduce heat to medium-high and cook farro 30-35 minutes, until tender.
3. Drain farro then stir in pesto.
4. Serve the farro with chicken skewers, adding extra lemon wedges.