

Cornelian cherry transforms Hir village into a colorful destination



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Iranica Desk

As late August arrives, cornelian cherry trees in the gardens of Hir village, Qazvin Province, begin to bear fruit, transforming the village with new colors and aromas. The local people, dressed in traditional clothing and wearing smiles, celebrate the harvest, seizing the opportunity not only to gather the fruit but also to preserve their native customs and culture, sharing them with tourists. This beautiful village enjoys a pleasant and delightful climate, with a flowing river called Ninerud that supports thriving agriculture. Surrounded by lush gardens, Hir village boasts unique charm, complemented by its picturesque cobblestone alleys, according to chtn.ir.

Located in the western Alamut neighborhood of Qazvin Province, Hir sits among the high mountains of Central Alborz, about 65 kilometers north of Qazvin. This mountainous, cold-weather village's inhabitants speak the Tati language with the Deylami dialect. The village lies beside a rocky mountain called Latar Teleh; the word "Teleh" means cliff in the local dialect. A longstanding connection between the people of the Ashkur region in Gilan Province and the residents of Hir and Viar villages has influenced the local dialect, facilitated trade, and fostered familial bonds. This connectivity also allows Ashkur residents to travel to central Iran through these villages, contributing to Hir's status as one of the



largest villages in western Alamut. Hir village is the largest producer of cornelian cherry in the province, and every harvest season, it hosts the Cornelian Cherry Festival, featuring local music, traditional

games, and distribution of the fruit, attracting many tourists. On festival day, villagers, accompanied by music and drums, harvest the fruit, a challenging task due to the orchard's steep slopes. Harvested fruit, often unripe, is

transported by pack animals in wooden boxes and ripens en route to markets. Orchard owners with the largest production areas and best quality fruit are honored during the festival. After harvesting, villagers

spread the fruit on rooftops, painting the village red, a distinctive seasonal spectacle. In bountiful years, over 200 tons of cornelian cherry are exported nationwide from these orchards. The cornelian cherry here is renowned for high quality and delicious taste. The province's total orchard area is 750 hectares, yielding about 5,000 kilograms per hectare, with an estimated output exceeding 3,750 tons annually. The fruit's tart flavor is typically processed into compote, jam, syrup, and fruit leather. Cornelian cherry flowers provide abundant nectar for honeybees, while its dark green, glossy leaves and oval, reddish fruit add to its appeal. Rich in antioxidants,

fruit offers significant health benefits, aiding in the prevention and treatment of diabetes and cancer. Beyond nutrition, cornelian cherry possesses medicinal properties, acting as an astringent to reduce bleeding and an antipyretic to lower fever. Both the fruit and its skin nourish the body and replenish nutrients. Consumed fresh or dried, especially off-season, the fruit's tree wood also holds value for crafting machine parts due to its water-resistant nature. Hir village, therefore, is not only a picturesque destination with authentic cultural traditions but also a vital agricultural hub contributing significantly to Qazvin Province's economy and tourism appeal.

Kooftah Tabrizi; legendary Persian stuffed meatballs

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Kooftah Tabrizi is a celebrated Iranian dish originating from the city of Tabriz, the capital city of East Azarbaijan Province. This delightful meatball recipe stands as a true culinary treasure, skillfully blending rich ground beef, fragrant herbs, and a carefully selected mix of spices to create a mouthwatering and satisfying treat. The meatballs themselves are a harmonious combination of ground beef, rice, split peas, finely chopped onions, and a fresh herb medley that includes parsley, cilantro, and thyme. Additionally, dried herbs such as mint and tarragon

contribute a complex layer of aroma. This vibrant mixture is expertly seasoned with turmeric, salt, and black pepper, resulting in a depth of flavor that truly excites the palate. What sets Kooftah Tabrizi apart is the special stuffing hidden inside each meatball. Plump prunes, crunchy walnuts, and crispy fried onions are gently tucked into the center, adding a delightful contrast of textures and bursts of sweetness and nuttiness with every bite. Once carefully shaped, these juicy meatballs are slowly simmered in a tangy tomato sauce, allowing all the flavors to meld together beautifully.

The sauce is made from sautéed onions, turmeric, tomato paste, and water, creating a rich, savory base that perfectly complements and enhances the taste of the meatballs. Kooftah Tabrizi is far more than a simple meatball dish. Its distinct juicy richness and unique spice blend make it an extraordinary culinary experience. More than just food, it embodies tradition and history — a dish that has been cherished for generations by families and friends gathering around the table to savor its wonderful flavors. Each bite of this Persian delicacy tells a story of Iran's rich history and culture, reflecting the love and care put into its preparation. Kooftah Tabrizi is not merely a meal; it is a heartfelt reminder of the joy found in sharing food with loved ones.

When served, the combination of flavorful, tender meatballs and tangy tomato sauce creates a harmonious delight in every mouthful. As the meatballs simmer gently in the sauce, they absorb its essence, becoming juicy and richly flavored. Enjoying Kooftah Tabrizi is an experience that goes beyond nourishment; it invites you to savor every bite thoughtfully. To elevate the dish further, fresh herbs such as parsley, mint, and basil are of-

ten added. These vibrant greens brighten both the presentation and the flavor, bringing a fresh, aromatic note that harmonizes beautifully with the hearty meatballs. Traditional accompaniments include a generous spoonful of plain yogurt or labneh, which offers a cool, creamy contrast to the warm and spiced meatballs. Alongside this, Torshi — a special Persian pickle — adds a tangy, flavorful kick that completes the meal perfectly. Serving Kooftah Tabrizi with fresh Persian bread allows diners to dip

into the flavorful broth, creating an evocative and truly memorable dining experience. Ultimately, this dish is much more than just food; it is a celebration of Persian culinary tradition, leaving a lasting impression on anyone fortunate enough to savor it. This version reflects traditional serving elements such as Sabzi Khordan (fresh herbs), Persian bread for dipping in the broth, yogurt, and Torshi, all of which contribute to the authentic and rich cultural experience of enjoying Kooftah Tabrizi.



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