

## Got Game

Meatballs with a Spanish-Jewish twist



We've done [beef](#), [pork](#) and even [shrimp](#). But Alex Raij is opening our eyes to a meatball that eschews even the thought of a pasta accompaniment. Raij and her husband, Eder Montero, co-owners of New York City's [El Quinto Pino](#) and [Txikito](#), opened La Vara in Brooklyn, New York, last month. Raij's *albóndigas de cordero* (Sephardic-style lamb meatballs) are one of many dishes on the menu inspired by the Jewish and Moorish influences in Spanish cuisine. At the restaurant, these small, *harissa*-flavored meatballs are served alongside a minted yogurt. But we're tempted to devour them straight out of the skillet, without a noodle in sight.

### *Albóndigas de Cordero (Sephardic-style lamb meatballs)*

Recipe adapted from Alexandra Raij and Eder Montero, La Vara, New York City

**Yield:** Serves 4

**Cook Time:** 10 minutes

#### INGREDIENTS

2 teaspoons ground cumin  
2 teaspoons ground coriander  
2 teaspoons ground caraway  
1/2 teaspoon ground fennel seed  
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
1 1/2 pounds chilled ground lamb  
2 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt  
2 scallions, finely chopped  
1/2 cup loosely packed cilantro leaves, finely chopped  
1/2 cup loosely packed flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped  
1 1/2 tablespoons harissa paste  
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped  
1 egg yolk, beaten  
1 cup *panko* (Japanese breadcrumbs)  
3 tablespoons canola oil, divided

#### DIRECTIONS

1. In a small skillet set over medium heat, toast the cumin, coriander, caraway, fennel seed, cinnamon and cayenne pepper, stirring until aromatic, about 10 seconds.
2. In a large bowl, add the ground lamb and make a well in the center. Add the toasted spices, salt, scallions, cilantro, parsley, *harissa* and garlic and gently fold together. Add the egg yolk and *panko* and stir just until combined. Place the mixture in the refrigerator and chill for 1 hour.
3. Remove the lamb from the refrigerator and roll into 1-inch balls. Place a large skillet over medium heat and add 1 tablespoon of the canola oil. Working in batches, add the meatballs and fry until browned on all sides and cooked through, 6 to 8 minutes. Serve hot.