

## Information | Workshop How to make a 'kroket'

### What is in fact a 'kroket'?

A crispy coating covering a soft filling, that's what it says in the 'Krokettenboek' (book about 'kroketten') by Johannes van Dam (famous Dutch food critic). According to starred French chef, Marc Veyrat, the principle of the 'kroket' has been around for approximately 30.000 years. Let's just say, people have been making them for quite a while.

Ever since the 17<sup>th</sup> century recipes have been written down and passed on with some regularity, though they were considered a luxury, only meant for a select few, up to the early 1900s.

Since then the 'kroket' has been on a bit of a journey to find its way to a wider audience, at first in patisseries, later on in snack bars. Making the 'kroket' available to the general public was accompanied by the introduction of cheaper ingredients to make them more affordable. Bit by bit the 'kroket' went from luxury course to spicing up leftovers.

Not that there's anything wrong with using leftovers, by the way! I myself take pride in not wasting food and always using up as much as possible.

Which isn't to say that upgrading the 'kroket', or to be more precise, restoring it to its former glory, isn't a lot of fun and, of course, absolutely delicious.

### Salpicon

This is what the mixture inside the 'kroket' is called.

In the course of time roughly 4 methods were developed to prepare the salpicon:

- on the basis of a puree (potato is commonly used, but other examples include aubergine or pumpkin);
- on the basis of soaked bread crumbs, with egg yolks as binding agent;
- on the basis of a roux (combination of butter and flower);
- on the basis of mashed beans (most commonly chick peas);

Naturally, the four ways can also be combined, depending on the desired result. In the workshops I always try to apply different techniques where possible.

### The meat or fish

In the workshops we tend to use meat/fish that's already been cooked, in order to save time. This isn't mandatory, of course, you can make 'kroketten' with any meat or fish you like.

### The stock

In our workshops we use either stock cubes or powder, though this is mainly due to time restraints. With 'kroketten' based on a roux (butter, flower and stock) the stock is very important to the overall flavour, therefore using a slow-cooked homemade broth will produce an even better flavour. That said, with cheaper supermarket or snack bar 'kroketten' the stock makes up most of the filling, so introducing a lot of other ingredients that add flavour, reduces the importance of the stock.

In short, we at Stichting Kroket feel that if you use other beautiful ingredients it's ok to use stock cubes.

### The binding

Historically, egg yolks and/or soaked bread crumbs and/or roux were used to bind a 'kroket'. However, these techniques require some experience and are really time-consuming. Nowadays we have more modern techniques. Gelatine is one such, which is simple to use but contains meat, so isn't an option in vegetarian recipes. Furthermore, it still requires quite some cooling time as it takes about 6 hours to set.



### ~The binding continued

There are plenty of alternatives available today, which are mainly used in the food industry, but they're also for sale at wholesalers (Hanos, Sligro and Makro) or online. In our workshops we use agar-agar to bind the filling. This product emanates from the Asian cuisine and consists of seaweed, so it's entirely plant-based. You can buy it at any organic shop (natuurwinkel) or Asian shops. It already starts to turn gelatinous at 40 degrees, saving a lot of time. It does, however, have to boil for at least two minutes. Another disadvantage that agar-agar shares with other 'modern' powders is that it requires very accurate measuring, because of its strong binding powers. To bind 1 liter of fluid you need 4 to 8 grams of agar-agar. I use special scales that measure accurately to the hundredths of a gram. These are available at specialised kitchen equipment stores or online. The amount can also vary, because acids and fats reduce the binding powers, while products containing calcium (like milk) enhance those powers. Sometimes it's a little bit trial and error to get the desired consistency.

### Breading

Personally, I make the breading out of many different things, if only to add another layer to the flavour sensation. You can think, for example, of nuts, seeds, prawn crackers, cornflakes, crisps or dried herbs, but also stale bread, which I leave to further dry in the oven (usually about an hour at 100 degrees Celsius does the trick).

In supermarkets you can generally buy two kinds of ready-made breading. The regular packets are generally made of 'beschuit' and very fine. Coarse breading delivers more bite. The increasingly well-known 'panko' (the Asian variety of breading) is made from (white) bread and much coarser. You can get it from most supermarkets nowadays, otherwise try an Asian shop. I usually stick to: fine breading – egg (white) – coarse breading.

If the salpicon contains cheese, for example, the 'kroket' will need an especially firm layer that definitely seals in the filling. It will take an extra layer. In this case I tend to start with (wholemeal) flour (or any other kind of flour); flour – egg (white) – fine breading, refrigerate, fine breading – egg (white) – coarse breading.

### Egg yolks and/or whites

Traditionally, people used egg whites to apply the layer of breading. This is a result from using egg yolks in the salpicon, which automatically leaves the egg whites. The whites also have more sticking power than the yolks. So if you have other plans for the egg yolks, only the whites will do just fine. Some chefs add a dash of olive oil, others salt or sugar. Stichting Kroket is still in the experimental phase where this is concerned, so we're not able to offer up any definitive advice on this yet.

### Frying

To fry something properly is an art in itself. You have to be vigilant, take it seriously. If the 'kroket' has been defrosted (which definitely gives the best results), the best temperature to fry at is 180 degrees C. If it's still (partly) frozen, the best temperature is 170 degrees, while also increasing the frying time a little. Depending on size and if it's frozen or not most 'kroketten' will be done in 1 to 6 minutes.

Choosing the right oil to fry in is essential. Most frying oils from supermarkets will only heat up to 170 degrees. Always read the instructions or stick to the maximum temperature!

Personally, I like to use rice oil, followed by ground nut oil or a mixture of vegetable oils. This is also in order of cheapest, least smelling and best result.

Every 'kroket' will start leaking when heated. This is simple science, something that's heated will expand. The thing you want to avoid is the complete draining of the filling. When the 'kroketten' start leaking you can hear it, the oil will start to spit more, something which you can also see. When they start to leak, I usually remove all of them from the fat. To check whether they are warm inside, I cut one open. If they aren't warm yet, I return the rest to the fat.

It is never a good idea to leave them suspended over the frying pan, they will turn soft.

Pay attention to the crust, you want it to be brown but not too dark.

