

Meatballs And Sauce

This recipe started life as a Cook's Illustrated "Sunday Gravy". It is tweaked to suit us.

Meatballs

2/3 lb ground beef (85%)
1/3 lb ground pork (80%)
1/2 cup herb-seasoned stuffing mix
1/2 cup buttermilk
2 oz. prosciutto
2 egg yolks
1/2 cup finely grated parmesan
1/4 cup parsley leaves
1 teaspoon dried oregano
2 teaspoons basil
2 med garlic cloves minced
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon of black pepper
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
Vegetable oil

Sauce

1 lb hot Italian sausage links
1 3/4 cups onions chopped fine
1 1/4 teaspoons dried oregano
1 (6 oz) can tomato paste
4 lg. garlic cloves minced
2 (28 oz) cans of crushed tomatoes
1 tablespoon dried basil
pieces of parmesan rind if you have
Olive oil

Instructions

Meatballs: I usually do this first so the balls can firm up in the fridge before browning.

Combine stuffing mix and buttermilk and let set for ten minutes. Add to this parsley, basil, garlic, egg yolk, salt, nutmeg, and pepper in medium bowl and mix evenly until no clumps. Add meat and cheese to bread crumb mixture; mix with hands until thoroughly combined. Quarter the mixture and then cut the quarters into thirds, roll into balls, transfer to plate, cover with plastic, and refrigerate until ready to use (firms them up for later).

With 30 minutes left to cook sauce, heat oil in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add meatballs and cook until well browned all over, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer meatballs to paper towel-lined plate to drain briefly. Remove pot from oven and spoon off fat. Submerge meatballs in sauce and put back in oven for the last 15 or so minutes.

Sauce: Adjust oven rack to lower- middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Heat oil in large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until just smoking. Brown sausages on all sides, 5 to 7 minutes total. Transfer sausages to plate.

Reduce heat to medium, add onions and oregano; cook, stirring occasionally, until beginning to brown, about 5 minutes. Add tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly, until very dark, about 3 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add crushed tomatoes, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom. Add rind pieces if you have them. Return sausage to pot; bring to simmer, cover, and transfer to oven. Cook about 2½ hours. Add basil to sauce just before serving.

Notes –

- I usually buy 2 pounds of ground beef and 1 pound of ground pork, mix them and then freeze 2/3 of it in 1 pound packages so I have the mixture ahead.
- If I make these as cocktail meatballs for a party I make them 18 grams each which yields about 44 meatballs.
- I sometimes add 3 oz. of diced pancetta to the sauce if I remember to get it ahead of time, but it is still great without it.