

Braised Meatballs

This recipe, from California Culinary Academy student Sarah Fritsche, makes just enough sauce to flavor the soft, creamy polenta. The meatballs would be terrific in a sandwich too. Panko breadcrumbs are Japanese and can be found in the Asian foods section of most grocers.

INGREDIENTS:

Meatballs:

- 2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, or as needed
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1½ pounds lean ground beef
- ½ pound ground pork
- ½ cup panko breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup minced parsley
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt or to taste
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Sauce:

- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 8 ounces cremini mushrooms, sliced
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- ¼ cup dry, low tannin red wine
- 2 cups low-salt or unsalted beef stock or broth
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- ½ cup canned diced tomatoes, including juice
- ½ teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- ¼ teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
- ½ teaspoon chopped fresh oregano
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh

basil

- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Kosher salt to taste
- Creamy Blue Cheese Polenta (see Recipe)

INSTRUCTIONS: For the meatballs:

In a large pan with just enough oil to coat, sauté onion until translucent, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds more. Remove from pan and set aside.

In a large bowl, combine ground beef and pork. Add breadcrumbs, cheese, egg, parsley, sautéed onion and garlic mixture, salt and pepper. Mix thoroughly. Fry a little of the mixture, taste and add more salt, if necessary.

Using a quarter measuring cup, scoop mixture out and roll each scoop into individual meatballs. You should end up with approximately 18 meatballs.

In the same skillet used to sauté onions, brown meatballs in olive oil over medium-high heat (approximately 8-10 minutes). Remove from the pan and set aside on paper towels.

For the sauce: In the same pan used to brown the meatballs, add the onion and cook over medium-high heat until translucent. Add mushrooms and cook for about 3-5 minutes, using more olive oil if needed. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds more.

Add wine, beef stock, tomato paste and tomatoes. Stir to combine. Bring mixture to a boil. Reduce to a simmer, add meatballs and cover. Cook for 25 minutes or until done. Remove lid and add the herbs. Turn heat up to high and reduce cooking liquid by half.

Remove from heat and stir in Dijon mustard. Add pepper and season to taste with salt.

Serve with Creamy Blue Cheese Polenta.

Note: You can form and sear the meatballs in advance, then finish cooking them in the sauce later. The sauce can also be made ahead, but add the herbs just before serving.

Serves 6

PER SERVING: 700 calories, 44 g protein, 28 g carbohydrate, 45 g fat (20 g saturated), 171 mg cholesterol, 1,234 mg sodium, 3 g fiber.