



OLD-FASHIONED MEATBALLS IN RED SAUCE

MAKES TWELVE 2½-INCH MEATBALLS

Most of us have a tough time saying no to the lure of a meatball. Well, here is a batch of meatballs ready for the test. These particular ones, a mixture of beef and sausage, are laid out in a pan, then smothered in crushed tomatoes and seasoned with grated Romano cheese. Then they're baked in a hot oven, which accomplishes two things. First, it saves the step of browning them on top of the stove. And second, the sauce is automatically seasoned with the savory meatball juices and zesty, salty Romano.

Leslie Revin suggests dressing up these juicy meatballs with melted mozzarella and a scattering of fresh basil.

- 1 pound ground round (15 percent fat)
- ½ pound sweet Italian sausage
- ½ cup plain dry bread crumbs
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese
- 1¾ cups canned crushed tomatoes in heavy purée

► Remove ground round and sausage from refrigerator 30 to 60 minutes before cooking, if possible. Place bread crumbs in large bowl and stir in ⅓ cup water. When absorbed, blend together with eggs, garlic, ¼ cup grated Romano, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper.

► Preheat oven to 425°F. Add meats to bread crumb mixture and combine well with fork. Form into 12 even balls. Lay in 1 layer in 8 x 14-inch baking dish so each is separated by about 1 inch.

► Stir ¼ cup water into crushed tomatoes and season with ⅛ teaspoon salt and pepper to taste. Pour tomatoes over and around meatballs. Sprinkle tops with remaining 1½ tablespoons grated Romano. Bake in center of oven until meatballs are just cooked through, about 18 minutes. Serve hot.

A NOTE FROM GOURMET'S FOOD EDITORS:
We substituted ground sirloin for the ground round in this recipe and added ⅛ teaspoon salt to the meat mixture and ⅛ teaspoon salt to the sauce. We recommend baking the meatballs in a 13- by 9-inch glass baking dish until they are just cooked through, 18 to 22 minutes.