



Meatballs With Tomato Pan Sauce and Parsleyed Potatoes

(Polpette al Pomodoro con Patate al Prezzemolo)

makes 3 or 4 servings (12 meatballs)
 prep: 20 minutes | cook: 25 minutes

Dara O'Brien



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INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound meatloaf mix (1 part each ground beef, veal, and pork) (see Note)
- ½ cup unseasoned dry bread crumbs
- ½ cup grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts
- ½ cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley or chives
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- Sea salt or kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 egg, beaten
- Vegetable oil
- 6 small boiling potatoes, cut into chunks
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1½ cups strained tomatoes (such as Pomi) or chopped canned plum tomatoes with some of the purée

Note: A couple of secrets to getting meatballs to turn out consistently tender and succulent. The first is not to overdo it with bread crumbs. The second, and more important, rule is to use the best ground meat you can get. Ask your butcher to grind a top-drawer meatloaf mixture. Alternatively, grind top-quality beef chuck at home in a food processor. For this, you'll still need help from the butcher or meat manager. Here's what to do: Buy 12 ounces of beef chuck in one piece plus a couple of ounces of solid beef or pork rib fat (most likely this will be free). Cut the meat into 1-inch pieces and the fat into ½-inch pieces. Place one third of each in a food processor, and pulse about 20 times until chopped medium fine. Remove the ground meat to a bowl and process the other two batches. Use in the recipe as instructed.

PREPARATION

1. Fill a medium saucepan or skillet broad enough for the onions. Place the meatloaf mix in a medium bowl, kneading with one hand to combine the meats. Add the bread crumbs, cheese, pine nuts, half of the parsley, garlic, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper; mix until the ingredients are incorporated. Add the egg and knead gently until the mixture is moistened.
2. Check the seasoning by breaking off a small glob of the meatball mix and frying in a little vegetable oil in a small pan until cooked through. Taste and add more salt and pepper to the entire mixture if needed.
3. With a spoon, scoop up a golf ball-size piece of the meatball mixture. Gently roll to make a ball (about 2 ounces); flatten slightly with your hand. Place on a piece of waxed paper and repeat with the rest of the meatball mixture.
4. Place the potatoes in a medium saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain and return to the pan. Drizzle with a little olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and stir in the remaining parsley; keep warm over the lowest setting.
5. In a large skillet, heat a generous quantity of vegetable oil (about 1/3 cup) over medium heat. Fry the meatballs, turning with tongs or a wooden spoon, until well browned on both sides but not cooked through, about 10 minutes. Remove to a plate.
6. Drain and discard all but a film of crusty oil on the bottom of the skillet. Add the wine, letting it bubble and reduce a little as you scrape up any brown bits clinging to the bottom of the pan. Stir in the tomatoes and add a pinch of salt. Return the meatballs to the pan, spooning the sauce over them. Simmer slowly, covered, until the meatballs are cooked and the sauce is fairly dense, about 15 minutes; during the cooking, turn the meatballs once or twice to coat with the sauce.
7. Serve the meatballs and potatoes alone or with a steamed green vegetable such as broccoli.

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