

Meatballs in Mushroom Pasta Sauce

Secrets for Simple Suppers | February 2006



One recipe of meatballs makes more than five dozen.

- 2 EGGS, SLIGHTLY BEATEN
- 1¹/₃ CUPS SOFT BREAD CRUMBS
- ³/₄ CUP FINELY CHOPPED ONION
- ¹/₂ CUP GRATED PARMESAN CHEESE
- ¹/₄ CUP FINELY SNIPPED GOLDEN RAISINS, DRIED CRANBERRIES, OR CURRANTS
- 1 TBSP. DRIED ITALIAN SEASONING
- ³/₄ TSP. SALT
- ¹/₂ TSP. CRUSHED RED PEPPER
- ¹/₄ TSP. GROUND BLACK PEPPER
- 1¹/₂ LB. BULK SWEET OR HOT ITALIAN SAUSAGE
- 1¹/₂ LB. GROUND BEEF, VEAL, OR PORK
- 2 PORTOBELLO MUSHROOM CAPS (STEMS REMOVED), SLICED, AND/OR ONE 9-OZ. PKG. FROZEN ARTICHOKE HEARTS, THAWED
- 2 TBSP. OLIVE OIL
- 1 26-OZ. JAR PURCHASED PASTA SAUCE
- ¹/₂ CUP SLICED PITTED RIPE OLIVES
- HOT COOKED PASTA

For meatballs, in a very large bowl combine eggs, bread crumbs, onion, Parmesan cheese, raisins, Italian seasoning, salt, red pepper, and black pepper. Add sausage and ground beef; mix well. Wet hands and shape mixture into 64 meatballs. Place meatballs in two 15×10×1-inch baking pans. Bake in a 350° oven on separate oven racks about 20 minutes or until done (160°). Drain meatballs on paper towels. Return to cooled baking pans, cover loosely, and freeze until firm. Transfer to freezer bags or containers; seal, label, and freeze up to 3 months.

For sauce, in a Dutch oven cook mushrooms and/or artichokes in hot oil until tender. Stir in pasta sauce, olives, and 16 frozen meatballs. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover; simmer 15 minutes or until meatballs are heated through. Serve over pasta. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

VARIATIONS

MEATBALL SANDWICHES WITH RED PEPPER SAUCE: Stir together half of a 26-ounce jar pasta sauce, ¹/₂ cup roasted red sweet pepper strips, and 16 frozen meatballs. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until meatballs are heated through. Meanwhile, split 4 Italian rolls or hoagie buns; hollow out some of the bottom half of each roll. Spoon sauce and meatballs into roll bottoms. Arrange on a baking sheet. Top with shredded mozzarella cheese. Broil 4 inches from heat for 1 to 2 minutes or until cheese melts and browns lightly. Top with roll tops.

MEATBALL PIZZA: Thaw 16 frozen meatballs. Cut each in half. Spread purchased pasta or pizza sauce over a purchased 12-inch Italian bread shell or purchased baked pizza crust. Top with meatballs and desired amount of shredded provolone and Parmesan cheese. Bake in a 400° oven for 12 to 15 minutes or until heated through.

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MEATBALL SKEWERS: Place 8 frozen meatballs in a microwave-safe baking dish. Cover with waxed paper. Cook on 70% power for 3 to 4 minutes or until meatballs are heated through, turning meatballs once. Cool slightly. Thread meatballs, desired cubed cheese, drained marinated artichoke hearts, and pepperoncini alternately on eight 6-inch skewers. Serve with warmed pasta sauce.

PESTO MEATBALLS, PASTA, AND VEGETABLES: Place 16 frozen meatballs in a microwave-safe baking dish. Cover with waxed paper. Cook on 70% power for 5 to 6 minutes or until meatballs are heated through, turning meatballs once. Meanwhile, cook 8 ounces desired pasta according to package directions, adding 2 to 3 cups cut-up desired vegetables (such as broccoli flowerets, purchased shredded or sliced carrot, or frozen sweet pepper and onion blend) to the pasta the last 5 minutes of cooking. Drain and toss pasta mixture with meatballs and 1/2 cup purchased basil pesto.