

Spaghetti and Meatballs alla Nonna

Swick

Serves 1 | Active Time: 45 minutes | Total Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

Chef's Notes

These meatballs freeze very well. This way, you will have delicious meatballs whenever the desire strikes! Simply thaw in the refrigerator and then cook.

Step 1: Preparing the Mirepoix

- 1 large white onion
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 to 4 tbsp fresh herbs (Italian parsley, basil)

To prepare the mirepoix, first finely mince the onion. Next, finely mince the garlic and fresh herbs.

Here you can add a bit of your personal flare. If you like Greek flavors, add a touch of oregano or if you like lots of garlic, add more...it's up to you. Half Italian parsley and half basil is quite nice.

Step 2: Cooking the Mirepoix

- 2 tbsp grapeseed or vegetable oil

To cook the ingredients, sweat the onions in the oil until soft and translucent, about 5 minutes.

Next, add the garlic and sweat for a few seconds. Then add the fresh herbs, toss to combine and remove from the heat to cool completely.

Step 3: Grating the Cheese

- 1/3 cup Parmigiano-Reggiano (can use half pecorino, if desired)

To grate the cheese, cut the Parmigiano into smaller pieces and pulse in a food processor until quite fine. Alternatively, you can simply grate the cheese using a hand grater.

Step 4: Soaking the Bread

- 4 slices thick-cut bread (approx. 2 cups)
- 1 cup milk

To prepare the bread, first remove the crust and then cut it into approximately 1" - inch cubes.

Next, slowly add the milk, making sure the bread gets evenly coated. Set the bread aside to soak for about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, go ahead and prepare the meat.

Step 5: Preparing the Meat

- 1 1/2 lb lean ground beef
- 3/4 lb ground pork
- 3/4 lb ground veal

To prepare the meat, gently mix together in a large bowl. Do not over-mix.

If you prefer, you can use more ground beef and less of the pork or veal. You can even leave out one (or both of them) and use strictly beef; again it's up to you.

Step 6: Finishing the Bread

Once the bread is soft, gently squeeze out the excess milk. Squeeze small batches at a time so it's easier to remove most of the excess milk.

Next, break up the bread a bit and add it to the meat. Discard the excess milk.

Step 7: Mixing the Meatballs

- 1 large egg
- 1 to 2 tsp chili flakes (optional)
- 1 tbsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

To mix the meat balls, add the cooled onion-garlic-herb mixture, followed by the grated cheese. Next, add the egg, chili flakes, salt and pepper and mix until just combined. Do not over-mix or the meatballs will be tough once cooked.

Step 8: Testing the Meatballs

- 1 tsp grapeseed or vegetable oil

Heat a small fry pan. Once hot, add the oil and cook the meatball until fully cooked through. Let cool slightly and taste. Adjust the seasoning of the mixture, if needed.

This is a great habit to get into. By cooking a tester, you will ensure your food has enough seasoning before you roll and cook all of the meatballs.

Step 9: Rolling the Meatballs

Line a tray with parchment or plastic wrap. Roll out the meatballs, trying to be as consistent with the size as possible. This will ensure they cook at the same rate.

Use a scale to measure out 2-ounce portions. You can roll larger ones and only serve one or two per person. Roll the meatballs whatever size you like. When done, you can either freeze them or proceed with the recipe.

Note: If freezing the meatballs, place them onto a tray. Leave a bit of space in between each one so they freeze separately. Once frozen, transfer to a plastic freezer bag. These meatballs freeze well for several weeks.

Step 10: Preparing the Tomato Sauce

- Tomato Sauce (approx. 3/4 cup per person) Using a large, heavy-bottomed pot slowly heat the tomato sauce over medium-low heat.

Once it comes to a gentle boil, turn the heat to low and let it simmer while you finish the meatballs.

Step 11: Pan Frying the Meatballs

- grapeseed or vegetable oil, as needed

Pan frying the meatballs is a matter of preference; however, the browning will provide more flavor. If you do not want to pan fry the meatballs, simply add them straight to the tomato sauce and let simmer for approximately 15 minutes or until fully cooked through.

To pan fry the meatballs, make sure the pan is properly heated and then add just enough oil to lightly coat the pan. Add the meatballs and let cook on all sides until golden.

At this point, the meatballs can be finished either in the pan or they can be added to the sauce to finish cooking. They can even be finished in the oven if you like.

Step 12: Cooking the Pasta

- 6 L/qt cold water
- salt (1 tsp salt per L/qt of water)
- dried or fresh pasta (approx. 4 oz per person)

To cook the pasta, follow the cooking times on the package. Just be sure to use plenty of boiling, salted water, and cook until al dente (if using dried pasta).

The type of pasta you use is up to you. Typically, meatballs are served with spaghetti, but fettucinni or even fresh, hearty noodles, such as tagliatelle, would also be great.

If you are making your own pasta, try cutting the pasta sheets by hand. This will allow you to cut the pasta into nice big rustic noodles (i.e. pappardelle).