

Lamb Meatballs with Pomodoro and Ricotta

By Geoffrey

Yield: 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

Tomato Sauce:

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 white onion, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- kosher salt, to taste
- freshly cracked black pepper, to taste
- 1 (28-ounce) can whole plum tomatoes, such as San Marzano, crushed by hand
- 1 handful fresh basil, torn by hand
- 1/8 teaspoon granulated sugar

Meatballs:

- 1/2 cup small torn baguette pieces
- 3 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon whole milk
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, plus more as needed
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 1 shallot, finely diced
- kosher salt, to taste
- freshly cracked black pepper, to taste
- 1/2 pound ground lamb, 30% fat
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh sage
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh oregano
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon sweet smoked paprika
- 2½ teaspoons toasted crushed fennel seeds

- 1 (8-ounce) wedge Parmesan cheese, as needed

To Serve:

- 1 baguette, sliced into 3/4-inch pieces olive oil, as needed
- 1/3 cup whole-milk ricotta
- fresh basil, torn for garnish

PREPARATION

1. **For the tomato sauce:** In a large sauté pan, heat olive oil over medium heat, add the onion and garlic, season with salt and pepper, and cook until softened and translucent, 10 to 12 minutes.
2. Add the tomatoes, fresh basil, sugar and salt. Cook until the mixture comes to a simmer, stirring frequently.
3. Once it simmers, turn the heat down to low and continue to stew the mix down while you make the meatballs, or for 30 to 45 minutes.
4. If desired, pass the sauce through a ricer. For a more rustic sauce, skip this step.
5. Taste again for seasoning at the end and add more salt and pepper if needed.
6. **For the meatballs:** Soak the baguette in the milk for 30 minutes to 1 hour, then process into breadcrumbs in a food processor.
7. Heat olive oil in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic and shallot, and season with salt and pepper. Cook until softened and translucent, 5 to 10 minutes. Set aside to cool completely.
8. In a large bowl, combine the shallot/garlic mixture, breadcrumbs, salt, pepper and all other meatball ingredients. Preheat the oven to the broil setting.
9. Grease a sheet tray with olive oil. Using a medium scoop, form the meatballs into 1½-inch balls and place them on the sheet tray. Grate Parmesan cheese over the top of each meatball and cook in the oven until golden, about 5 minutes. Remove meatballs from the oven and set aside. Lower oven to 400 F.
10. **To serve:** Rub each baguette slice with olive oil on each side and toast until golden on a grill pan or skillet over medium heat or on a sheet tray in the oven.
11. Place tomato sauce at the base of an oval copper dish or small baking dish that you can serve in and add the meatballs on top of the sauce, leaving about 1/2 to 1 inch between each one. Dollop ricotta cheese between the meatballs and bake until the sauce is bubbling and the center of the meatballs reads 145 F on a digital thermometer, 15 to 20 minutes.
12. Remove from the oven, grate more Parmesan cheese over the top, garnish with fresh basil and serve with toasted baguette on the side.