



Meatball Parmesan

Makes: 6 servings

Total Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

Sauce (see Chef's Note):

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped (1 1/2 cups)
- 2 medium cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh oregano or 1 tsp dry oregano
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 2 26-ounce containers diced tomatoes, preferably Pomi brand
- Kosher salt

Meatballs:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 8 ounces ground pork
- 6 ounces 80% lean ground beef
- 6 ounces ground veal
- 1 cup coarse fresh white breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup whole-milk ricotta
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh oregano or 1 1/2 tsp dry oregano
- 1/2 tsp fennel seed, freshly ground
- 1/8 tsp crushed red pepper flakes
- Kosher salt
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese, grated
- 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, grated

Make the Sauce:

Heat the olive oil in a heavy-duty 4-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic,

oregano, and bay leaf. Cook, stirring often, until the onion is soft, 6-10 minutes. Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly, until darkened, 3 to 4 minutes.

Add the tomatoes and their juice and 1 teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil and then simmer over low heat, stirring frequently, until the sauce has reduced by about a third, about 40 minutes. Remove the bay leaf and season to taste with salt. Keep warm, covered. (The sauce can also be refrigerated for up to 5 days or frozen for 1 month.)

Make the Meatballs:

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. Coat the bottom and sides of an 8×8-inch baking dish with the olive oil. Set aside. Combine the ground meats, breadcrumbs, ricotta, eggs, parsley, oregano, fennel seed, red pepper flakes, and 2 teaspoons salt in a large bowl. Mix gently but thoroughly with your hands. Divide the meat into 16 golf ball-size portions using a 2-ounce, 2-inch diameter ice cream scoop or your hands. Arrange the balls snugly in the baking dish. Bake the meatballs until they register about 90°F on an instant-read thermometer and are firm to the touch, 10 to 12 minutes.

If you've made the tomato sauce ahead and refrigerated it, heat it while the meatballs are cooking.

Remove the meatballs from the oven and drain excess fat, if there is any, from the pan. Ladle the sauce over them, then top with mozzarella. Sprinkle the Parmesan over and return them to the oven and continue to bake until an instant-read thermometer inserted into one meatball reads 165°F, about another 15 minutes. This dish can be made ahead and then reheated in the oven. It can also be frozen for a quick dinner!

Chef's Note:

This recipe makes double the amount of sauce that you will need. Use it for pasta or freeze for another time.