

To make the sauce, in a large fry pan over medium heat, warm the olive oil. Add the onion and sauté until tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the wine, broth and meatballs, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes. Add the *picada* and cook for a few minutes more to blend the flavors. Taste and adjust the seasonings. Transfer to a serving dish and serve hot. Serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Savoring Series, *Savoring Spain & Portugal*, by Joyce Goldstein (Time-Life Books, 2000).

## Vietnamese Meatballs (*Banh Mi*)

Banh mi is the term for Vietnamese baguette bread that is used to make a variety of sandwiches. Here, the bread is filled with Vietnamese meatballs and an Asian-flavored slaw. For a delicious alternative, serve the meatballs on a bed of rice noodles and the slaw.

In a large bowl, combine the pork, basil, garlic, green onions, fish sauce, chili sauce, sugar, cornstarch, salt and pepper and gently mix together. Rinse your hands with water but do not dry them. Shape the meat into 2-inch balls, rolling them lightly between moistened palms. As the balls are made, set them aside on a large platter or tray. The meatballs can be made up to 1 day ahead. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate.

To make the Asian slaw, in a bowl, stir together the carrots, daikon radishes, vinegar and sugar, and season with salt and pepper. Let stand at room temperature for 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

Preheat an oven to 300°F.

In a large fry pan over medium-high heat, warm the oil. Working in batches, add the meatballs and cook, turning them occasionally, until browned on all sides and cooked through, about 10 minutes; reduce the heat if the meatballs are browning too quickly. Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet and keep warm in the oven.

Slice each baguette lengthwise and pull out enough of the bread from the inside to create a well for the meatballs. Spread chili mayonnaise on the cut sides of the bread, then place one-fourth of the meatballs in the well of each baguette. Top with the slaw and garnish with the jalapeño and cilantro. Alternatively, place the meatballs on a bed of rice noodles and slaw, drizzle with a little of the slaw dressing, and garnish with the jalapeño and cilantro. Serves 4.

Adapted from a recipe by Williams-Sonoma Culinary Expert.

January 28, 2011

### Meatball Make-Ahead Tip

You can prepare meatballs up to 2 months in advance. After forming the raw meatballs, place them on a baking sheet and freeze thoroughly, about 2 hours, then transfer to an airtight container. Before cooking the meatballs, defrost them in the refrigerator overnight.

### Ingredients for Vietnamese Meatballs (*Banh Mi*)

#### For the meatballs:

- 1 lb. ground pork
- ¼ cup fresh Thai basil leaves (also known as purple basil), finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 green onions, finely chopped
- 1 Tbs. Asian fish sauce, such as nam pla\*
- 1 Tbs. Asian chili sauce, such as sriracha
- 1 Tbs. sugar
- 2 tsp. cornstarch
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. freshly ground pepper

#### For the Asian slaw:

- 2 cups julienned carrots
- 2 cups peeled and julienned daikon radishes
- ¼ cup rice vinegar
- ¼ cup sugar
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

- 1 to 2 Tbs. canola oil
- 4 baguettes, each 10 inches long, or rice noodles for serving
- Chili mayonnaise (if making sandwiches) (optional)
- 1 jalapeño, thinly sliced
- ½ cup fresh cilantro leaves, roughly chopped or torn into pieces

\*Available in the Asian food section of many supermarkets and at Asian markets.

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# Technique Class: Meatball Mania

When it comes to comfort food, meatballs are a favorite in cuisines around the world. Simple to make and enjoyed by children and adults alike, meatballs are perfect for family suppers.

## Meatball Basics

### Grinding Your Own Meat

There are several advantages to grinding meat yourself: you can choose the types and ratios of meat and control the amount of fat incorporated into the meatballs, plus you'll know exactly what has gone into your ground meat. Grinding meat is simple to do at home with the use of a home meat grinder. Follow these key steps:

- Cut the meat into ¾-inch cubes.
- Freeze the meat cubes: Line a rimmed baking sheet with waxed paper. Without crowding the meat cubes, spread them in a single layer on the sheet. Freeze until the meat begins to form ice crystals around the edges, about 30 minutes.
- Grind the meat: Working in small batches, transfer the partially frozen meat chunks to a meat grinder. Grind the meat to the desired consistency according to the manufacturer's instructions.

### Forming and Seasoning Meatballs

- Mix the meatball ingredients according to your recipe. To check the seasonings, fry a small nugget of the meat mixture until cooked through. Let cool slightly, then taste and adjust the seasonings as needed for the rest of the mixture.
- Use an ice cream scoop to scoop up some of the meat mixture and release it onto a parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet.
- To prevent the meat mixture from sticking to your hands, moisten them with cool water. Roll each portion of the meat mixture between your palms to form a ball. Return the ball to the baking sheet and repeat with the remaining portions, always moistening your hands before you roll each ball.
- Use a gentle touch, handling the meat mixture lightly. If you pack or squeeze the meatballs, they can become tough and dry.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Tools & Techniques* (Gold Street Press, 2007).

## Classic Italian Meatballs in Sauce

**Ingredients for Classic Italian Meatballs in Sauce (Meatballs *in Sugo*)**

**For the meatballs:**

3 or 4 slices coarse country bread, crusts removed and bread crumbled (about 1½ cups)

½ cup milk

1 lb. ground beef chuck

½ lb. ground veal

½ lb. ground pork

2 eggs, lightly beaten

1 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

¼ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 garlic clove, minced

1½ tsp. sea salt

Freshly ground pepper, to taste

2 Tbs. olive oil

**For the sauce:**

1 small yellow onion, finely chopped

1 garlic clove, minced

2 cans (each 28 oz.) plum tomatoes, crushed, with juice

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

3 or 4 fresh basil leaves, torn into small pieces

*Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Hors d’Oeuvre*, by Brigit L. Binns (Simon & Schuster, 2001).*

**Ingredients for Moroccan-Style Meatballs**

2 Tbs. olive oil

1 red onion, very finely chopped

1 lb. ground lamb

3 large garlic cloves, crushed through a press

2 eggs, lightly beaten

1 cup loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, finely chopped

1 cup loosely packed fresh mint leaves, finely chopped, plus sprigs for garnish

2 Tbs. fine dried bread crumbs

1½ tsp. ground cumin

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

1 tsp. salt, plus more, to taste

½ tsp. freshly ground pepper, plus more, to taste

Lemon wedges for squeezing and garnish

About 42 cocktail picks (optional)

## Classic Italian Meatballs in Sauce (Meatballs *in Sugo*)

*This recipe makes a generous amount of sugo, or “sauce,” so you will have plenty left over to serve with pasta or to save for another meal.*

To make the meatballs, in a small bowl, mix the crumbled bread and milk and let stand for 10 minutes.

In a large bowl, combine the beef, veal, pork, eggs, cheese, parsley, garlic, salt and a few grinds of pepper. Squeeze the bread with your hands to remove the excess moisture, then discard the liquid. Add the bread to the meat mixture and mix gently until combined.

Rinse your hands with water but do not dry them. Shape the meat into 2-inch balls, rolling them lightly between moistened palms. As the balls are made, set them aside on a large platter or tray.

In a fry pan large enough to hold all of the meatballs in a single layer, warm the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the meatballs and cook, turning them occasionally, until crisp and browned on all sides, about 15 minutes. Transfer the meatballs to a plate and drain off all but 2 Tbs. of the fat from the pan.

To make the sauce, return the pan to medium heat, add the onion, and sauté until softened and golden, about 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the crushed tomatoes and their juice, stir well and deglaze the pan, scraping up the browned bits from the pan bottom. Season with salt and pepper and bring to a simmer. Cook until the sauce thickens, about 20 minutes. Stir in the basil.

Return the meatballs to the pan and cook, basting them often with the sauce, until hot and cooked through, about 10 minutes. Transfer the meatballs to a warmed platter and spoon some of the sauce over them; reserve the remaining sauce for another use. Serve immediately. Serves 6 to 8.

*Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Essentials of Italian, by Michele Scicolone (Oxmoor House, 2007).*

## Moroccan-Style Meatballs

*Although these meatballs are not a traditional dish of Morocco, the presence of mint, parsley, cinnamon and cumin gives them a strong North African accent. Use a light hand when forming the balls, just as you would when shaping a hamburger patty. A gentle touch ensures that the meat is not compacted or overheated by contact with your hands, resulting in light, tender mouthfuls.*

Lightly oil a shallow-rimmed baking sheet.

In a fry pan over medium-low heat, warm the olive oil. Add the onion and sauté, stirring occasionally, until very soft, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and let cool.

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Add the lamb, garlic, eggs, parsley, chopped mint, bread crumbs, cumin, cinnamon, the 1 tsp. salt and the ½ tsp. pepper to the bowl with the onion. Combine the ingredients thoroughly with your hands (the only way to evenly distribute the ingredients). Fry a small pinch of the mixture, then taste and adjust the seasonings with salt and pepper. Form the mixture into balls about the size of a walnut, rolling them very lightly in the palms of your hands. Place on the prepared baking sheet.

Preheat a broiler. Place the meatballs about 4 inches from the heat source and broil, turning once with tongs, until brown and crispy on both sides, about 10 minutes total. Remove the baking sheet from the broiler and transfer the meatballs to a platter.

Squeeze some lemon juice over the meatballs and arrange the remaining lemon wedges and mint sprigs on the platter. Using a cocktail pick, skewer each meatball. Serve immediately. Makes about 42 warm bites.

**Note:** The meatballs can be refrigerated for up to 4 hours before cooking. Remove them from the refrigerator 15 minutes before cooking. If desired, cook and cool the meatballs, refrigerate them for up to 4 hours and then reheat in a 350°F oven until heated through, 10 to 20 minutes. If doubling this recipe, use only 1½ times the amount of salt, not double the amount.

*Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Hors d’Oeuvre*, by Brigit L. Binns (Simon & Schuster, 2001).*

## Meatballs in Almond Sauce (*Albóndigas en Salsa de Almendra*)

*The proportion of bread to meat varies in albóndigas depending upon the extravagance of the cook. These meatballs can be fried and served on toothpicks; cooked in a cazuela; fried and tossed in a sauce made of pan juices enriched with sherry and meat stock; or prepared as they are here, fried in olive oil, then briefly simmered in a wine sauce thickened by a signature Catalan almond picada.*

To make the meatballs, in a bowl, combine the beef, pork, soaked bread, onion, garlic, parsley, egg, paprika, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Knead with your hands until well mixed. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour, as the mixture is easier to work with when cold.

To make the *picada*, in a mini food processor or mortar, combine the garlic, almonds, parsley, paprika and saffron, and process or grind to a paste. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

In a deep-fry pan over medium-high heat, pour in olive oil to a depth of 2 inches and heat to 375°F on a deep-frying thermometer. While the oil is heating, form the meat mixture into 1-inch balls and dust them with flour, coating evenly.

Working in batches, slip the meatballs into the hot oil and fry until golden, about 4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to paper towels to drain. (Alternatively, in a large fry pan over medium heat, warm a little olive oil and sauté the meatballs until well browned on all sides, 8 to 10 minutes.)

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## Meatballs in Almond Sauce (*Albóndigas en Salsa de Almendra*)

**Ingredients for Meatballs in Almond Sauce (*Albóndigas en Salsa de Almendra*)**

**For the meatballs:**

½ lb. ground beef

½ lb. ground pork

2 slices bread, about 2 oz. total, soaked in water to cover and squeezed dry

¼ cup minced yellow onion (optional)

2 garlic cloves, finely minced

3 Tbs. finely minced fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 egg, lightly beaten

1 tsp. sweet paprika

½ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg or ground cinnamon

1 tsp. salt

½ tsp. freshly ground pepper

*Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Essentials of Italian, by Michele Scicolone (Oxmoor House, 2007).*

**For the *picada*:**

2 garlic cloves, minced

3 Tbs. ground blanched almonds

2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

½ tsp. sweet paprika

A few saffron threads, crushed

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

*Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Essentials of Italian, by Michele Scicolone (Oxmoor House, 2007).*

Olive oil for deep-frying or sautéing

All-purpose flour for dusting

**For the sauce:**

2 Tbs. olive oil

½ cup minced yellow onion

½ cup dry white wine

⅔ cup meat or chicken broth