

MEATBALLS

Makes about 36

Make these meatballs and serve them with your favorite spaghetti sauce. Freeze any unused meatballs in a single layer on a cookie sheet and put the frozen meatballs into a large ziplock bag; remove as many as you need for your next meal, and thaw them out in a gently simmering tomato sauce.

1 slice sandwich bread with crust, finely cubed or torn (3/8 " cubes)
milk

1 lb. lean ground beef (90% - 93% lean)
1/2 cup grated Parmesano Reggiano or Grana Padano cheese
(GET THE BEST QUALITY CHEESE ONLY – DON'T USE THE CHEAP STUFF!!!)
3/8 cup tap water
1/4 cup dried minced onion (not onion powder)
1/2 tsp. dried thyme
1/2 tsp. dried oregano
1/2 tsp. dried basil
1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1 medium egg (optional)

Put the bread in a small bowl or 1-cup measuring cup. Add a little milk and wait for the bread cubes to sink and settle. Add enough milk so that the cubes aren't quite covered. Let sit 5 minutes, press out excess milk to drain well; discard milk.

Put the wet bread cubes in a bowl with the remaining ingredients and blend well with hands without over-mixing.

Roll into balls the size of a large walnut and place into a microwave-safe pie plate or similar shallow container. Crowd as many meatballs on a plate as you can in a single layer – spaces between the meatballs will overcook them. Although the center meatballs will be less done, it all works out simmering in the sauce: the underdone ones get finished in the sauce and the done ones stay hydrated by the sauce. Whatever you do, do NOT drain the meatballs of the juices on the plate – it all goes into the sauce.

Microwave on high for 6 minutes; remove from microwave and let cool. Freezes well.

Place meatballs into the sauce you'll be using for your meal and simmer on low until all is heated through and steaming slightly. I recommend Bertolli Tomato & Basil pasta sauce because it serves up a nice clean flavor and the meatballs don't go "clunk" in your gut.