**February / March Volume**

**Recipe 1:**

Drop Meatballs

**Description:**

Serves 6 to 8

You can use a #16 portion scoop to form the meatballs. To make shaping easier, wet your hands lightly. The recipe yields enough sauce for 2 pounds of pasta. To serve, toss the paste with some sauce and top it with meatballs.

**Ingredients:**

***Meatballs:***

22 square saltines

1 cup milk

2 pounds 85 percent lean ground beef

2 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (1 cup)

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon pepper

***Sauce:***

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

10 garlic cloves, peeled and smashed

½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

2 (28-ounce) cans crushed tomatoes

Salt and pepper

3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

**Instructions:**

1. **FOR THE MEATBALLS:** Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Place saltines in large zipper-lock bag, seal bag, and crush saltines fine with rolling pin (you should have 1 cup). Combine saltines and milk in large bowl and let sit for 5 minutes for saltines to soften. Mash with fork until smooth paste forms.
2. Add beef, Parmesan, garlic powder, oregano, salt, and pepper to saltine mixture and mix with your hands until thoroughly combined. Divide meat mixture into 24 scant ¼-cup portions. Roll portions between your wet hands to form balls. Transfer to plate, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate until ready to use. (Meatballs can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.)
3. **FOR THE SAUCE:** Combine oil and garlic in large Dutch oven. Cook over low heat until garlic is soft and golden on all sides, 10 to 12 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add pepper flakes and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in tomatoes and 1 teaspoon salt. Nestle meatballs into sauce. Bring to simmer over medium-high heat.
4. Cover and bake until meatballs are cooked through and tender, about 40 minutes. Let cool, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Gently stir in basil and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.