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## Italian Wedding Soup

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 14: Hearty Spanish and Italian Soups, Revamped

### WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Traditionally, this Italian soup is built from a base of meaty brodo, a long-cooked broth made from the bones of meat and fowl. Wanting to skip the fuss of cooking a brodo all day, we looked to fortify commercial broths. We first started with a combination of chicken and beef broth, which mimicked the flavor of brodo. Into these broths we simmered a small amount of ground beef and pork to heighten the savory flavor. To further boost the meaty flavor, we added *umami*-rich porcini mushrooms and Worcestershire sauce.

### Serves 4 to 6

Use a rasp-style grater to process the onion and garlic for the meatballs. Tubettini or orzo can be used in place of the ditalini.

### INGREDIENTS

#### Broth

- 1** onion, chopped
- 1** fennel bulb, stalks discarded, bulb halved, cored, and chopped
- 4** garlic cloves, peeled and smashed
- 1/4** ounce dried porcini mushrooms, rinsed
- 4** ounces ground pork
- 4** ounces 85 percent lean ground beef
- 1** bay leaf
- 1/2** cup dry white wine
- 1** tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 4** cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2** cups beef broth
- 2** cups water

#### Meatballs

- 1** slice hearty white sandwich bread, crusts removed, torn into 1-inch pieces
- 5** tablespoons heavy cream
- 1/4** cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 4** teaspoons finely grated onion

- 1/2**    ~~8~~ <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> teaspoon pepper
- 6**    ounces ground pork
- 1**    teaspoon baking powder
- 6**    ounces 85 percent lean ground beef
- 2**    teaspoons minced fresh oregano
- 1**    cup ditalini pasta
- 12**   ounces kale, stemmed and cut into 1/2-inch pieces (6 cups)

## INSTRUCTIONS

**1. FOR THE BROTH:** Heat onion, fennel, garlic, porcini, pork, beef, and bay leaf in Dutch oven over medium-high heat; cook, stirring frequently, until meats are no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Add wine and Worcestershire; cook for 1 minute. Add chicken broth, beef broth, and water; bring to simmer. Reduce heat to low, cover, and simmer for 30 minutes.

**2. FOR THE MEATBALLS:** While broth simmers, combine bread, cream, Parmesan, onion, garlic, and pepper to taste in bowl; using fork, mash mixture to uniform paste. Using stand mixer fitted with paddle, beat pork, baking powder, and ½ teaspoon salt on high speed until smooth and pale, 1 to 2 minutes, scraping down bowl as needed. Add bread mixture, beef, and oregano; mix on medium-low speed until just incorporated, 1 to 2 minutes, scraping down bowl as needed. Using moistened hands, form heaping teaspoons of meat mixture into smooth, round meatballs; you should have 30 to 35 meatballs. Cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day.

**3.** Strain broth through fine-mesh strainer set over large bowl or container, pressing on solids to extract as much liquid as possible. Wipe out Dutch oven and return broth to pot. (Broth can be refrigerated for up to 3 days. Skim off fat before reheating.)

**4.** Return broth to simmer over medium-high heat. Add pasta and kale; cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add meatballs; return to simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until meatballs are cooked through and pasta is tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve.

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## TECHNIQUE

### WHIP IT GOOD

Beating the ground pork distributes fat and moisture evenly for meatballs with a springy bite.



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## TECHNIQUE

### FLAVORFUL SOUP STOCK ON THE FLY

Skiping the fuss of a typical *brodo* doesn't have to mean sacrificing flavor. By doctoring commercial chicken broth, we got comparably rich-tasting results in under an hour.

### ATYPICAL AROMATIC

We rejected the standard carrots and celery for the anise notes of fennel. Onion and garlic, though, were musts.



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## TWO MEATS

No need to seek out meat scraps and bones for depth. A broth simmered with ground pork and beef is plenty savory.



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## TWO BROTHS

In addition to chicken broth, we use beef broth to mimic the flavor of traditional *brodo*.



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## UMAMI BOOSTERS

Umami-packed porcini mushrooms and Worcestershire sauce amp up the broth's meaty flavor.

