

Classic Spaghetti and Meatballs for a Crowd

From America's Test Kitchen episode: *Pasta, Please*.

Serves 12

One cup of plain yogurt thinned with ½ cup milk can be substituted for the buttermilk. Grate the onion on the large holes of a box grater. The ingredients in this recipe can be reduced by two-thirds to serve 4. For instructions on how to cook the pasta in less water, see [Lots of Pasta, Less Water](#) (related).

INGREDIENTS

MEATBALLS

- 2 1/4** cups (about 6 ounces) panko bread crumbs
- 1 1/2** cups buttermilk (see note)
- 3** large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2** pounds 85 percent lean ground beef
- 1** pound ground pork
- 6** ounces thinly sliced prosciutto, chopped fine
- 3** ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 6** tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves
- 3** medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 1 tablespoon)
- 1 1/2** teaspoons powdered gelatin, dissolved in 3 tablespoons cold water
- Table salt and ground black pepper

SAUCE

- 3** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2** cups grated onion from 1 to 2 onions (see note)
- 6** medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 2

tablespoons)

1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes

1 teaspoon dried oregano

6 cups tomato juice (bottled)

3 (28-ounce) cans crushed tomatoes

6 tablespoons dry white wine

Table salt and ground black pepper

3 pounds spaghetti

1/2 cup minced fresh basil leaves

3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves

Granulated sugar

Parmesan cheese, grated, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. FOR THE MEATBALLS: Place wire racks in 2 foil-lined rimmed baking sheets. Adjust oven racks to lower-middle and upper-middle positions and heat oven to 450 degrees. Combine bread crumbs and buttermilk in large bowl and let sit, mashing occasionally with fork, until smooth paste forms, about 10 minutes.

2. Add eggs, beef, pork, prosciutto, Parmesan, parsley, garlic, gelatin mixture, 1 1/2 teaspoons salt, and 1/2 teaspoon pepper to bread-crumble mixture. Using hands, gently mix until thoroughly combined. Lightly form about 1/4 cup mixture into 2-inch round meatball (about 2 ounces); repeat with remaining mixture to form approximately 40 meatballs.

3. Spray wire racks with nonstick cooking spray and place meatballs, evenly spaced, on racks; roast until browned, about 30 minutes, rotating trays from front to back and top to bottom halfway through.

4. FOR THE SAUCE: While meatballs roast, heat olive oil in large Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened and golden around edges, 6 to 8 minutes. Add garlic, red pepper flakes, and oregano; cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in

tomato juice, crushed tomatoes, wine, 1½ teaspoons salt, and pepper to taste. Increase heat to medium-high and bring to simmer. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until slightly thickened, about 15 minutes.

5. Remove meatballs from oven and lower oven temperature to 300 degrees. Gently add meatballs to sauce, cover pot, and place in oven. Cook until meatballs are firm and sauce has thickened, about 1 hour.

6. Meanwhile, bring 10 quarts water to boil in 12-quart pot. Add pasta and 2 tablespoons salt to boiling water; cook until al dente. Drain pasta and return it to cooking pot.

7. TO SERVE: Stir basil and parsley into sauce and adjust seasoning with sugar, salt, and pepper. Toss pasta with 1½ cups sauce until lightly coated. Serve pasta, passing meatballs, remaining sauce, and grated Parmesan separately.

TECHNIQUE

KEY INGREDIENTS FOR TENDER, FLAVORFUL MEATBALLS

PANKO

Absorbent Japanese bread crumbs hold on to meat juices.



PROSCIUTTO

Bits of glutamate-rich prosciutto boost meatiness.



PARMESAN

Also packed with glutamates, Parmesan builds savor.



BUTTERMILK

Tangy buttermilk lends more flavor than regular milk.



GELATIN

Gelatin helps the meatballs plump up and adds suppleness.



TECHNIQUE

STEPS TO EASIER, BETTER MEATBALLS BROWN IN OVEN

Roasting meatballs is far easier than messy, time-consuming batch-frying. Elevating the meatballs on a wire rack allows heat to circulate underneath for even browning.



COOK IN SAUCE

Most meatballs are simply warmed in the sauce. Allowing them to finish cooking in it adds richness to the sauce and juiciness to the meat.



America's Test Kitchen is a 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside of Boston. It is the home of *Cook's Country* and *Cook's Illustrated* magazines and is the workday destination for more than three dozen test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists.

Our mission is to test recipes until we understand how and why they work and arrive at the best version. We also test kitchen equipment and supermarket ingredients in search of brands that offer the best value and performance. You can watch us work by tuning in to *America's Test Kitchen* (www.americastestkitchen.com) on public television.