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The best tuna meatballs (Le migliori polpette di tonno)



Just about everyone I know is a fan of meatballs, so I thought I'd give you a recipe for these as they are something a little different. I've seen them made in Sicily in the same way, using a mixture of swordfish and tuna – not jarred or tinned tuna though. These have to be made with fresh fish and they are subtly seasoned with Sicilian herbs and spices – this recipe is just as good as the meat versions!

Nutritional Information (amount per serving)

Calories	Carbs	Sugar	Fat	Saturates	Protein
566kcal	27.6g	8.4g	32.7g	5.7g	38.1g

Serves 4 **Approx time:** 55 **Difficulty:** super easy

Ingredients

For The Tomato Sauce

- olive oil
- 1 small onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and finely sliced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 x 400 g good-quality tinned plum tomatoes
- sea salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- red wine vinegar
- 1 small bunch fresh flat-leaf parsley, leaves picked and roughly chopped

For The Meatballs

- 400 g tuna, from sustainable sources, ask your fishmonger
- olive oil
- 55 g pine nuts
- 1 level teaspoon ground cinnamon
- sea salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 handful fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- 100 g stale breadcrumbs
- 25 g Parmesan, freshly grated
- 2 free-range eggs
- 1 lemon

Method

First make your sauce. Place a large pan on the heat, add a good lug of olive oil, your onion and garlic and fry slowly for 10 or so minutes until soft. Add your oregano, the tomatoes, salt and pepper and bring to the boil. Simmer for 15 minutes or so, then liquidize until smooth. Taste – it might need a tiny swig of red wine vinegar or some extra seasoning.

While the tomatoes are simmering, chop the tuna up into 2.5cm/1 inch dice. Pour a good couple of tablespoons of olive oil into a large frying pan and place on the heat. Add the tuna to the pan with the pine nuts and cinnamon. Season lightly with salt and pepper and fry for a minute or so to cook the tuna on all sides and toast the pine nuts. Remove from the heat and put the mixture into a bowl. Allow to cool down for 5 minutes, then add the oregano, parsley, breadcrumbs, Parmesan, eggs, and zest and juice of the lemon to the bowl. Using your hands, really scrunch and mix the flavours into the tuna, then divide the mixture and squeeze it into meatballs slightly smaller than a golf ball. If you dip one of your hands in water while shaping you'll get a nice smooth surface on the meatball. If the mixture's very sticky, add a few more breadcrumbs. Keep the meatballs around the same size and place them on an oiled tray, then put them in the fridge for an hour to let them rest.

Put the pan you fried the tuna in back on the heat with a little olive oil. Add your meatballs to the pan and jiggle them about until they're golden brown all over. You might want to do them in batches – when they're done, add them to the tomato sauce, divide between your plates, sprinkle with chopped parsley and drizzle with good olive oil. Great served with spaghetti or linguine.