

# MEATBALLLLLLLS

## OLD-SCHOOL SWEDISH MEATBALLS

Serves 8

Though not a diet food. Swedish meatballs are a delicious addition to a holiday buffet or meal. They are traditionally served with buttered egg noodles but I also like them with barely sautéed shredded cabbage. Try also adding some capers to the sauce. Using crème fraîche prevents the sauce from curdling which happens when traditional sour cream is used.

3 slices day old whole wheat bread  
1/2 cup half and half  
2 tablespoons butter, divided  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1-1/2 cups finely chopped onion  
1 pound ground beef  
1 pound ground pork  
2 tablespoons brown sugar  
2 teaspoons salt  
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper, preferably white  
1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg  
1-1/4 teaspoons ground allspice  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1 large egg, beaten  
1/3 cup beef broth  
Dill sauce (recipe follows)

Preheat oven to 350° F. Cut crusts from bread and pulse in a food processor to form coarse crumbs. Place in a small bowl, add half and half and let sit about 10 minutes until absorbed.

Melt a tablespoon of butter in a large skillet over medium heat and cook onions until they are soft and just beginning to color, about 8 minutes. Transfer onions to a large bowl and add the meats, brown sugar, salt, spices and egg and mix until nearly combined. Add the moistened bread and mix until well combined.

Form the meatballs into 1-1/2 tablespoon sized balls. Heat the remaining tablespoon of butter and the olive oil and cook in batches until balls are nicely browned, about 5 minutes. The meat balls will not be cooked thru. Transfer to a baking dish in a single layer as they are browned. You may need to add a little more butter and oil to the skillet.

Pour the beef broth into the baking dish, cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes until the meatballs are fully cooked and tender. Drain off excess fat and pour the sauce over the meat balls. Serve warm.

### Dill Sauce

Makes a generous 3 cups

3 tablespoons butter  
3 tablespoons flour  
2-1/2 cups chicken or beef stock  
1 tablespoon dry sherry  
1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom  
1 cup crème fraîche  
2 teaspoons soy sauce  
2 teaspoons or so dry dill  
2 teaspoon whole grain mustard  
Salt and freshly ground pepper, preferably white

Melt the butter in a deep saucepan. Add the flour and whisk until combined and cook over moderate heat for 2 minutes or so to get rid of the raw flour taste.

Whisk in the stock making sure that there are no lumps and the sauce begins to thicken. Whisk in remaining ingredients, seasoning to your taste. Simmer for a few minutes to blend flavors. Can be made ahead and gently reheated.

## **LAMB MEATBALLS WITH SPICED TOMATO SAUCE**

Serves 4

This is an adaptation of a recipe by Suzanne Goin of A.O.C. restaurant in Los Angeles and her cookbook of the same name which I just love. Serve with pasta, rice or polenta. The lovely fruit of the 2013 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir would be delicious with this recipe.

### For the meatballs:

1-1/2 cups finely diced onion  
1/4 cup heavy cream  
2 large egg yolks  
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
1 tablespoon dried mint  
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, or to taste  
2 pounds ground lamb  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1 cup fresh bread crumbs  
1/4 cup chopped parsley

Olive oil for brushing the baking sheet

For the sauce:

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
1 cup finely diced onion  
2 teaspoons oregano  
Crushed red pepper flakes to taste  
1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds  
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes, preferably San Marzano  
1 teaspoon sugar  
1/3 cup orange juice  
2 teaspoons finely grated orange zest  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

For the topping:

4 ounces feta cheese, crumbled  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint leaves

Preheat broiler. In a large bowl, mix together the onion, cream, egg yolks, cinnamon, cumin, mint and red pepper flakes. Add lamb to the bowl, and season it well with salt and pepper. Add the bread crumbs and parsley and gently mix to combine. Take a little nubbin of the mixture and cook it to taste for seasoning. Adjust seasoning if needed. Shape the meat into balls about the size of golf balls.

Brush a rimmed baking sheet with olive oil and place the meatballs on it evenly spaced. Place beneath the broiler, and cook, turning once or twice, until the meatballs are well browned, approximately 7 minutes. Set meatballs aside and turn oven to 375 degrees.

Heat a deep saucepan over medium high heat and add the olive oil, onions, oregano, red pepper flakes, fennel seed and cinnamon and sauté until onions are translucent, about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes, sugar, orange juice and zest. Reduce heat to medium low and simmer gently for 5 - 7 minutes until nicely thickened. Season to your taste with salt and pepper.

Pour the tomato sauce into a large baking dish that you can put on the table. Transfer the meatballs to the sauce, spacing them about 1/2-inch from each other. Bake for 15 minutes or until the sauce is bubbling and the meatballs are cooked through. Top with crumbled feta and scattered mint.

## **CHICKEN AND SHRIMP MEATBALL SOUP WITH CELLOPHANE NOODLES**

Serves 6

Southeast Asia flavors are at work here with the interesting combination of chicken and shrimp meatballs.

5 ounces mung bean noodles, softened according to package directions  
1/2 pound peeled and deveined shrimp  
1/2 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs  
2 teaspoons finely chopped garlic  
3 tablespoons finely chopped green onions including the green tops  
2 tablespoons fish sauce  
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
1 teaspoon sugar  
8 cups rich chicken stock of your choice  
2 tablespoons soy sauce  
1 tablespoon brown sugar  
2 teaspoons chili garlic sauce, or to taste  
1 2-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and cut in fine julienne  
1/4 cup fresh lime juice  
1/4 cup roughly chopped fresh cilantro  
Fried garlic or shallots, if desired

Prepare noodles according to package directions. Drain and set aside.

Place shrimp and chicken in a food processor with the metal blade and pulse until coarsely chopped. Place the mixture out into a large bowl and stir in garlic, green onions, fish sauce, black pepper and sugar. Using a tablespoon to measure, gently roll each spoonful into a ball and set aside.

Add stock, soy sauce, brown sugar, chili garlic sauce and ginger to a soup pot and bring to a boil. Drop in the meatballs and cook until meatballs are done, about 8 minutes. Keep the soup at a gentle simmer so that it doesn't cloud. Adjust seasoning to your taste. Divide the noodles and lime juice among soup bowls, add the meat balls and ladle the broth over the soup and top with chopped cilantro and fried garlic or shallots.

John Ash (c) 2017