

Christa's Mouthwatering Greek Meatballs (Keftedes)

Recipe by Christa Sinadinou

Ingredients

2 Onions (yellow or white)
6 Garlic cloves
2 ½ Lbs. Ground lamb (Or lamb and beef mixture)
3 tbs. Olive oil
2 cups Breadcrumbs
3 Tbs. Tomato paste
2 Eggs
1.5 cups Italian parsley leaves (fresh)
1.5 cups Spearmint leaves (fresh)
¼-½ cup Thyme leaves (fresh)
2 Tbs. Oregano leaves (dry)
2 Tbs. Coriander powder
2 Tbs. Cumin powder
4 tsp. Cinnamon powder
2 tsp. Paprika, sweet
2-3 tsp. Sea salt
½-1 tsp. Fresh ground, black pepper

Directions

Prepare homemade breadcrumbs, utilizing directions listed below or purchase breadcrumbs to save a step.

Dice onions and mince garlic. Pour 2-3 tablespoons of olive oil in a pan. Place the onions in a pan with a lid; sauté on medium (or medium-low), stirring frequently, until they are translucent (5-8 minutes). Then add fresh garlic and sauté with onions and sauté for one to two more minutes and set aside.

Measure cumin seed and coriander seed; powder them separately in a coffee or spice grinder, or a blender. Filter ground seeds through a fine mesh strainer to remove particulate. Continue grinding remaining coarse seeds until they are powdered. **Note:** Powdering the whole seeds enhances the flavor tremendously, contributing greatly to the aromatic experience; however, powdered herbs can also be used. Place oregano leaves and the dry, powdered seeds in a small bowl and mix them with a whisk.

Rinse the fresh parsley, spearmint, and thyme, and then use a clean cloth or paper towel to remove moisture. Strip the leaves off the stems. Chop the fresh herbs or place in a food processor and pulse until they are coarsely ground. **Note:** Although the flavor of fresh herbs is superior, use half the quantity of the dried herbs if fresh herbs are not available.

In a separate medium-size bowl, crack two eggs and mix with tomato paste until they are thoroughly blended.

Place the ground meat in a large, stainless-steel or glass bowl. Sprinkle the sea salt and crack fresh pepper over the meat. Next, sprinkle the powdered herb mixture evenly over the meat and



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mix by hand until the powdered herbs are evenly distributed. Next, add the fresh herbs and the tomato paste and egg mixture and knead, then add bread crumbs and mix again until the ingredients are evenly distributed.

Cover and place the mixture in the refrigerator for 30 minutes. This step allows for easier meatball formation, but it can be skipped. Remove chilled meat mixture from the refrigerator and form approximately 1.5-inch (4 cm) meatballs. They should be slightly smaller than a golf ball. **Note:** A meatball-maker tool can be used to hasten their process.

Directions for Skillet-cooking Meatballs

Heat a cast iron skillet and add 2-3 tablespoons of olive oil. Add one layer of meatballs to the pan and continue cooking until they are browned on all sides and the inner temperature is 160°F (71°C). Place on a paper towel to soak up olive oil.

Directions for Baking Meatballs

Preheat the oven to 400°F (204°C). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place meatballs on the cookie sheet evenly spaced. Brush lightly with olive oil. Cook the meatballs for approximately 25-30 minutes, until they are browned on the outside. The inner temperature should be 160°F (71°C). Bake for longer if necessary.

Make in Advance

Uncooked meatballs can be frozen, thawed, and enjoyed later (within three months).

Plating

Serve meatballs with a side of tzatziki (cucumber-dill-yogurt sauce) or a raita-style mint-yogurt sauce, or a seasoned red sauce. Plate with a side of Greek lemon potatoes and sauteed seasonal vegetables and/or a small Greek salad. Garnish with a sprig of parsley or spearmint.

How to Make Breadcrumbs

Preheat oven to 425°F. Coarsely break up 4-6 slices of stale bread (gluten-free or wheat bread) and then place into a food processor and pulse until they form small crumbs. Place parchment paper on a cookie sheet. Spread the bread crumbs evenly over the cooking sheet. Bake for 10-14 minutes, and watch them closely to make sure that they are toasted, but not brown or burnt. Turn breadcrumbs halfway through. Set aside on a heat-safe surface to cool. I realize this recipe is complex and slightly time-consuming, but I promise that they are incredibly delicious, deeply satisfying, and well worth the effort!

Recipe Inspiration

I was inspired to create this recipe following a wonderful adventure to my homeland, Greece. While dining at a small highly recommended family restaurant (Mama Katrina's) on the island of Lesbos, I tasted the most delicious keftedes (Greek meatballs). I was instantly transported to my Yiayia's (grandmother's) kitchen. When I returned to the states, I was determined to make my best attempts to mimic the recipe, using the fresh ingredients grown in my garden. So far, everyone has raved about them; I hope that you do too!