

Our State eats

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Meatballs in North Carolina Soda Sauce

Yield: About 3 dozen meatballs in about 2½ cups sauce.

For the Sauce:

- 1½ cups soda, one or more flavors (not diet)
- 1 cup ketchup
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons packed dark brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- 1 teaspoon apple pie spice
- ¾ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper

For the Meatballs:

- 2½ ounces crustless soft white bread, torn into small pieces (2 unpacked cups)
- ½ cup whole milk or buttermilk
- ½ cup finely grated onion
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk
- ¾ cup (1½ ounces) finely grated Parmesan
- ⅓ cup minced fresh parsley
- Zest of 1 lemon, finely grated
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon mustard powder
- ½ teaspoon apple pie spice
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 pound ground chuck
- ½ pound ground pork

For the sauce: In a small saucepan, stir together all the ingredients. Bring to a low boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Reduce heat and simmer gently while preparing meatballs, or for at least 30 minutes, to reduce slightly and combine flavors.

For the meatballs: In a large bowl, stir together bread and milk. Let stand until bread is saturated, about 10 minutes. Use fingertips or fork to stir into a thick mash with no dry spots.

Add onion, egg, yolk, Parmesan, parsley, zest, salt, thyme, garlic powder, mustard powder, apple pie spice, and pepper. Stir well, let stand 5 minutes.

Crumble meat into bread mixture. Using clean hands, mix vigorously and thoroughly without compacting the meat. The mixture should be well combined and slightly sticky.

Preheat oven to 400°. Use convection, if you have it.

Use a 1-ounce spring-release scoop or fingertips to portion and form meatballs. Arrange on a rimmed baking sheet, spacing evenly. Each one should be about 2 tablespoons of the mixture and the size of a ping-pong ball.



Bake meatballs for 10 minutes or until they lose their raw color and begin to firm. Use a metal spatula to transfer them to a 9 x 13-inch baking dish or other shallow baking dish, arranging them in a single layer. Leave any liquid and residue on the baking sheet.

MEATBALL SMARTS

The way to check the seasoning of the meatballs before cooking them all is to fry a small spoonful of the meatloaf mixture in a skillet until it's cooked through.

Pour enough warm sauce into the dish to come about two-thirds of the way up the side of the meatballs. Return to oven and bake until meatballs are cooked through and browned on top, 10 to 15 minutes more. When done, an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center of a meatball should register 160°.

Serve warm with any remaining sauce on the side.

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