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Peak of Autumn Grass-fed Meatballs



In the Wet Mountain Valley, autumn is cool and a perfect season for comfort food. These savory meatballs have a bit of spice and a rich sauce. (Makes 16 medium Meatballs)

Meatball Ingredients:

2 pounds 100% grass-fed ground beef

1 medium onion, finely chopped

8 cloves of garlic, finely chopped

½ cup pecorino Romano cheese, finely grated (you can use Parmigiano-Reggiano, as well)

½ teaspoon ground allspice

1-teaspoon cinnamon

3 tablespoons sage leaves, finely chopped –fresh (or 1 tablespoon Dried)

1 tablespoon oregano-dried

Bunch of Italian flat-leaf parsley

2 eggs

1 piece day old bread, crusts removed

¼ cup milk

Olive Oil

Salt and Pepper

Sauce Ingredients:

¼-1/2 lb. pancetta, chopped or diced (Trader Joe's has pre-diced pancetta)

12-16 crimini mushrooms, chopped

Olive oil

2 cloves garlic, crushed

½ cup red wine-something spicy like zinfandel or chianti

½ to ¾ cup beef stock

1-28 oz. can of crushed tomatoes

1 tablespoon tomato paste

Serve with pasta, polenta, or just in sauce.

Cooking Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
2. Heat milk and remove from stove. Crumble bread into milk and stir until smooth.
3. Mix meat with the onion, garlic, eggs, bread mixture, cheese, allspice, sage, oregano, and parsley. Add a good drizzle of olive oil and salt and pepper and mix one more time. Form 16 meatballs and let rest until after you get sauce going.
4. Heat a few tablespoons of olive oil in sauté pan. Add pancetta and cook about 3-4 minutes. Add mushrooms and cook until water is out of mushrooms. Add garlic and cook a few minutes until you just smell garlic. Deglaze pan with red wine (let most of it cook off) and then add stock. Add tomatoes, tomato paste, salt and pepper. Bring sauce to a boil and then turn down to simmer for about 30 minutes. Sauce should be thick and not watery.
5. While sauce is simmering, roast meatballs. Arrange meatballs on a nonstick cookie sheet and roast 20 minutes until firm but not hard. Pull out of oven and let rest. Add meatballs to sauce and simmer gently for 15 min or until your pasta is prepared. Cook your pasta or polenta.
6. Arrange pasta on plates and serve meatballs (2-3, depending on your eaters) and sauce. Grate the Pecorino you used earlier over your meatballs.