

Neapolitan Meatballs
Polpette alla Napoletana

From Naples at Table © 1998
By Arthur Schwartz

Donna's Notes – When I initially began making this recipe I followed it as below. However, over time my version has evolved to where I use approximately 1 cup of bread cubes to approximately 1 pound of ground beef. I also have decreased the eggs and garlic to 1. I omit the pine nuts and raisins. Instead of frying, I place the meatballs on a rimmed baking sheet and bake at 375° for approximately 10-15 minutes.

I suggest that you experiment with the recipe until you find the proportions that create a meatball that you like. If I remember correctly, if you follow the recipe exactly, the mixture is quite loose and soft before cooking.

Makes 12 meatballs, serving 4-6

3 cups dried crust less bread cut into 1-1/2 cubes before measuring

1-1/4 pounds ground beef (preferably 80 percent lean, not leaner)

3 eggs, beaten to mix well

2 large cloves garlic, finely minced

½ cup (loosely packed) grated pecorino cheese

¼ cup (loosely packed) finely cut parsley

1/3 cup pine nuts

1/3 cup raisings

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon ground black pepper

¼ cup vegetable oil

1 quart tomato sauce

1. Soak the bread in cold water. Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, combine, but not yet mix, the remaining ingredients, except the oil and tomato sauce.
2. Squeeze the bread by fistfuls to drain it; then break it up into the bowl. First with a fork, then with your hands, blend the mixture very well, squishing it in your hands to make sure the bread blends with the meat. Do not worry about handling the meat too much.
3. With your hands moistened in cold water, roll the mixture between your palms into 12 meatballs, using about 1/3 cup of meat (1-1/2-inch diameter).
4. Heat the oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium to medium-high heat. When a drop of water sizzles immediately, it's hot enough for the meatballs. Gently place them in the pan and as soon as the first side looks brown, using a metal spatula, dislodge them and turn to the other side. As the cooking side browns well, continue rotating the

meatballs-I find a combination of a wooden spoon and a spatula/hamburger turner does the job best. After about 10 minutes the meatballs should be well browned but slightly rare in the center.

5. If serving the meatballs without sauce,, lower the heat slightly and continue to cook, rotating the meatballs regularly, for another 5 to 8 minutes. Serve immediately. If serving the meatballs with sauce, place them in the sauce now and simmer gently for 15 minutes. They may be held, but are best when served within an hour.