

Turkey & courgette meatballs in a roasted red pepper sauce

Admittedly, meatballs can be a bit of a faff, so you might not want to be making them on busy midweek evenings. However, the beauty of this recipe is that both the meatballs & the sauce can be made ahead of time. Once the meatballs have been formed & before they are cooked, you can freeze them to use another day - just make sure you defrost them safely, & then simply fry & continue the recipe as normal. The same goes for the red pepper sauce.

DIRECTIONS

1. Start by heating your oven to 200 °C / 180 °C fan / gas 6.
2. Halve the peppers lengthwise & remove the white pith, stem & seeds, rub with ½ a tsp of the oil, salt & pepper.
3. Place the peppers on a baking sheet, cut side down & roast for 30 minutes, until charred & very soft. Once cooked, set aside until you make the sauce.
4. For the meatballs, grate the onion & garlic into a large mixing bowl & add the turkey mince. Coarsely grate the courgette into a colander set over the sink or another bowl. Once grated, add a pinch of salt & leave to sit for about 10 minutes. By salting the courgette, you will draw out any excess water to ensure your meatballs don't go soggy!
5. Remove the leaves from the thyme sprigs & chop them up. Add the thyme leaves, chilli flakes & cumin to the meatball mixture, mix well to combine.
6. Using your hands, squeeze any remaining water from the grated courgette, then add to the meatball mix, along with the egg & breadcrumbs. Stir to combine then season with salt & pepper.
7. Form the mixture into about 16 equal sized balls.
8. Heat 1 tsp of oil in a large saucepan or high sided frying pan over a medium-high heat. Fry the meatballs in batches until browned on all sides & just cooked through - about 10 minutes. Once cooked, set aside on a plate & move onto the sauce.

9. Finely dice the onion & grate the garlic.

10. Remove the peppers from the oven, by now the skin should very easily peel off & the peppers should be very soft. Run your knife through the peppers until they become almost paste-like.

11. In the same pan that you fried the meatballs in, add the remaining oil & gently cook the onions for 5 minutes. Add the garlic & cook for another 2 minutes, before adding the roasted peppers.

12. Add the tomato paste & cook for 2 minutes, then add the tinned tomatoes.

13. Fill the empty tomato tin up about halfway with water & add this to the sauce as well.

14. Slice up the basil leaves & add to the sauce, reserving some for the garnish. Season to taste.

15. Return the meatballs to the sauce, reduce the heat & let this simmer away for 10-15 minutes, until it has thickened a little.

16. Meanwhile, get your pasta on. Cook it in salted water for about 3 minutes shy of the package instructions. Lift the spaghetti out of the water & straight into the sauce. Gently stir to combine, being careful to not break the meatballs, adding a little bit of the starchy pasta water if needed, to give you a lovely glossy sauce that coats the pasta wonderfully.

17. Pile the pasta & meatballs high on warm plates, top with a grating of parmesan & the remaining basil.

Nutritional information: Calories - 578 Fat - 9g Carbs - 67g Sugars - 18g Fibre - 8g Protein - 55g Salt - 0.7g

This recipe utilises turkey mince as a high protein, low fat meat option. It is also a good way to sneak a load of veg into one comforting meal!

SERVES 4



INGREDIENTS

For the roasted red pepper sauce:

- 2 red bell peppers
- 2 tsp neutral oil, such as vegetable or sunflower oil
- Salt & pepper
- 1 medium white onion
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 x 400g tin of tomatoes
- A large handful of fresh basil

For the meatballs:

- 1 small white onion
- 1 garlic clove
- 500g lean turkey mince
- 2 small courgettes
- Salt & pepper
- A few sprigs of thyme
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- 1 tsp cumin seeds (or half a tsp ground cumin)
- 1 large egg
- 35g breadcrumbs

To serve:

- 400g spaghetti
- 40g parmesan cheese

