



FOOD & DRINK

Honor National Meatball Day with This Delectable Recipe for Mediterranean Lamb Balls



MARCH 9, 2016 @ 10:15 AM

BY: SYDNEY MONDRY

It's unclear who claimed March 9 as National Meatball Day, but we're not complaining. These spherical gems are delicious atop a plate of spaghetti, resting on a bed of veggies, nestled in a sub, or eaten plain with a fork and knife. To celebrate their special day, we got our hands on a delectable recipe from [The Meatball Shop](#) (duh), a treasured N.Y.C.-based restaurant with locations scattered throughout Manhattan. Read below to learn how to make the eatery's filling and flavorful Mediterranean Lamb Balls with Spinach Basil Pesto.

Mediterranean Lamb Balls with Spinach Basil Pesto

Ingredients

2 tbsp olive oil
2 lbs ground lamb
3 large eggs
1 cup dark raisins, chopped
1/2 cup walnut halves, finely chopped
1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
1/2 cup chopped fresh mint
1/2 cup bread crumbs
2 tsp salt
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

For the Spinach Basil Pesto

1/4 cup roughly chopped walnuts
4 cups baby spinach leaves (or arugula, if you prefer)
2 cups fresh basil
1 tsp salt or to taste
1/2 cup olive oil
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Directions

1. To make the spinach basil pesto: Preheat oven to 350°F. Fill a large stockpot 3/4 full with water and bring to a boil over high heat.
2. Meanwhile, spread out the walnuts on a small-rimmed baking sheet and roast in the oven for about 12 minutes, giving them a shake every 6 minutes. Continue roasting until golden brown and toasted. Set aside and allow to cool thoroughly.
3. Fill a large bowl halfway with ice water, and set it close to the sink.
4. Dump the spinach and basil into the boiling water and stir. After 1 minute, strain the greens, and plunge them into the bowl with ice water. Strain the greens again and squeeze them tightly to get as much water out as possible. Chop the greens roughly.
5. Combine the greens and walnuts with the salt, olive oil, and Parmesan in a food processor and process until a smooth consistency is reached. Taste and season with additional salt, if desired.
6. To make the meatballs: Preheat the oven to 450°F. Drizzle the olive oil into a 9 x 13-inch baking dish and use your hand to evenly coat the entire surface. Set aside.
7. Combine the ground lamb, eggs, raisins, walnuts, parsley, mint, bread crumbs, salt, and pepper in a large mixing bowl and mix by hand until thoroughly incorporated.
8. Roll the mixture into round, golf ball-size meatballs (about 1 1/2 inches), making sure to pack the meat firmly. Place the balls in the prepared baking dish, being careful to line them up snugly and in even rows, vertically and horizontally, to form a grid. The meatballs should be touching one another.
9. Roast for 20 minutes, or until the meatballs are firm and cooked through. A meat thermometer inserted into the center of a meatball should read 165°F.
10. Allow the meatballs to cool for 5 minutes in the baking dish before serving.