

Forget the wings, pass the meatballs



Mini Buffalo Chicken Balls with Blue Cheese Dressing & Celery are a great alternative to wings.

By JEFF HOUICK | The Tampa Tribune
Published: January 21, 2012

2 Comments | Post a Comment

I love watching football. I love meatballs. There's no reason the two can't go together on game day.

And since the Super Bowl is in a couple of weeks, it can't hurt to get your appetizer menu started early.

One way to feed a lot of hungry mouths is to make meatballs in advance.

I found this recipe for Mini Buffalo Chicken Balls in the new book "The Meatball Shop Cookbook" by Daniel Holzman and Michael Chernow. (Ballantine Books, \$28). To me, they look a lot easier to prepare and less work to eat than chicken wings. As with Buffalo wings, you'll want to serve these balls with blue cheese dressing.

Pressure-cooker mail

A few weeks back, Roy Loweke of Sebring asked for a recipe to make pressure-cooker baked beans. Many readers replied and we ran recipes. Since then, we've had more correspondence from Winifred Pfister of St. Petersburg, Jan Baker and De Clark of Lutz.

Roy writes to say that, "Mrs. Billings of Avon Park called me with the recipe from her old Mirro cookbook."

Ed Prange wrote to say that he read this column and went to Sears to buy a stainless steel cooker for \$69 and a \$10 Rewards card.

Ed says he used to own a pressure cooker in the '70s that he used for making jams, jellies and preserves, but he donated it to the Salvation Army after his family moved to the Bayshore Diplomat from Davis Islands on Halloween 1977.

"Our stove was insufficient for such a large pot," he says. "We now have a glass top stove and more space between the stovetop and the microwave, so this should work out fine."

Wants Maas sangria

"Years ago, while in college, I worked in one of the Maas Bros. restaurants in Gainesville," writes Susan Biggs Burgess. "Maas had the best sangria!"

Susan had the sangria recipe but lost it. She remembers the department store chain used a bottle of burgundy wine, added some brandy, included a half-cup of simple syrup and cherry juice.

"I think a little orange juice or orange liqueur and a couple of squeezes of half a Persian lime," Susan recalls. "They put maraschino cherries and navel orange slices in the pitcher."

As well as she remembers the ingredients, she doesn't know the correct proportions to make the beverage.

"Do you think anyone can help me with this?" Susan asks. "In 30 years, I've never had sangria that I liked as well as this."

This may be a tough one to fulfill. I included a request in 2005 from Janet Cameron of Seffner, who asked for the same recipe. We never got a response. But hope springs eternal when the goal is delicious sangria.

Until that one comes in, I'm including several sangria recipes from the Tribune archives, including from the now defunct but much beloved Café Pepe in Tampa.

Leftover requests

Lou Burnside of Tampa would like to make the penne pasta salad made at the Carrollwood Deli.

Ken Thompson of Wauchula wants to make a slaw recipe similar to the version served at the Blue Bird restaurant in Winter Haven.

Eva Ebert wants the recipe for the mixed greens salad with vinaigrette and grilled chicken that she used to enjoy at the now-closed El Pilon Restaurant in South Tampa.

Karen Johnson says she wants to make the house salad dressing from ABC Pizza.

DeAnn Kirby wants to make the recipe for shrimp (or chicken) with Czarina sauce served by Circles restaurants in Tampa.

Ellen Scudiero of Holiday wants the recipe for fried almond shrimp served with orange sauce that was served at the Leverock's in New Port Richey.

Bob Moore wrote recently asking for the recipe to make a steak sandwich like the one served at the former Mac and Ivey's on Henderson Boulevard in the 1960s.

Connie Rott wants the fried beef tips recipe served with yellow rice at J.D.'s in Ybor City.

Mini Buffalo Chicken Balls

Makes 40 3/4-inch balls

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
1/3 cup Frank's Red Hot sauce or any other favorite hot sauce
1 pound ground chicken, preferably thigh meat
1 large egg
1/2 celery stalk, minced
3/4 cup bread crumbs
1 teaspoon salt

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Drizzle the vegetable oil into a 9-by-13-inch baking dish and use your hand to evenly coat the entire surface. Set aside.

Combine the butter and hot sauce in a small saucepan and cook over low heat, whisking until the butter is melted and fully incorporated. Remove from the heat and allow the mixture to cool for 10 minutes.

Combine the ground chicken, hot sauce mixture, egg, celery, bread crumbs and salt in a large mixing bowl and mix by hand until thoroughly incorporated.

Roll the mixture into round, 3/4-inch balls, 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.

Roast for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the meatballs are firm and cooked through. A meat thermometer inserted into the center of a meatball should read 165 degrees.

Allow the meatballs to cool for 5 minutes in the baking dish before serving.

Source: "The Meatball Shop Cookbook," by Daniel Holzman and Michael Chernow.

Café Pepe Sangria

1/2 bottle red or white wine
1 1/2 tablespoons sugar
Lemon and orange slices
1 1/2 ounces brandy
1 ounce triple sec
2 dashes cinnamon

Crush with a wooden spoon lemon and orange slices and sugar in bottom of a pitcher. Add wine, brandy and triple sec, ice and cinnamon. Swirl several times with wooden spoon and serve.

White Sangria

Makes 6 servings

2 1/2 cups dry white wine
2 cups sparkling wine
Sliced lemons and limes
1/2 cup sliced strawberries
6 red grapes, cut in half

Combine dry and sparkling wines together. Add lemons, limes, berries and grapes.

Sangria

Makes 1 gallon

1/2 cup peach schnapps
1/2 cup cognac
1/4 cup sugar
4 oranges, sliced into rounds
2 mangoes, peeled and sliced
4 (750 milliliter) bottles dry white wine, chilled
1 liter ginger ale, chilled

In a pitcher, combine peach schnapps, cognac, sugar, sliced oranges and sliced mangoes. Chill for at least 1 hour. Pour fruit mixture into a large punch bowl. Stir in white wine and ginger ale.