

Dining & Wine: Recipes

Lamb Meatballs With Spiced Tomato Sauce

Adapted from “The A.O.C. Cookbook,” by Suzanne Goin.

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SUMMARY

Here is a recipe from the Los Angeles chef Suzanne Goin that plays to children as well as to the most sophisticated of palates. It is for crisp lamb meatballs cooked through in a fragrant, vaguely North African sauce of tomato sauce zipped up with orange juice and warm spices, then topped with feta and mint. Ms. Goin first served the dish at one of her Los Angeles restaurants, and put it into “The A.O.C. Cookbook” (2013), devoted to that restaurant’s food. A version of the dish was later introduced to the menu of her children’s school. It can be cooked in an hour’s time, not all of it busy, and served with pita or plain pasta, bulgur or couscous.

TOTAL TIME 1 hour

FOR THE MEATBALLS

1 medium onion, peeled and finely diced

¼ cup heavy cream

2 egg yolks, extra-large

½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground cumin

Pinch red-pepper flakes

Pinch cayenne pepper, or to taste

2 pounds ground lamb

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 cup bread crumbs

¼ cup chopped parsley

FOR THE SAUCE

1 28-ounce can whole tomatoes

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 small sprig rosemary

Red-pepper flakes to taste

1 medium onion, peeled and diced

½ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves

½ teaspoon ground cumin

Pinch ground cinnamon

Pinch cayenne pepper

1 bay leaf

½ teaspoon white sugar

¼ cup orange juice

1 3-inch strip of orange peel, pith removed

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

FOR THE TOPPING

4 ounces feta cheese, crumbled

2 tablespoons thinly sliced mint leaves

PREPARATION

1. Preheat broiler. In a large bowl, mix together the onion, cream, egg yolks, cinnamon, cumin, red pepper and cayenne. Put the lamb in the bowl, and season it aggressively with salt and pepper. Add the bread crumbs and parsley, and combine the mixture well. Shape the meat into balls that are a little larger than golf balls.
2. Grease a baking pan with olive oil, and put the meatballs onto it, spaced evenly. Place beneath the broiler, and cook, turning once or twice, until the meatballs are well browned, approximately 5 to 7 minutes, then set meatballs aside. Turn oven to 400.
3. Meanwhile, make the sauce. Pass the tomatoes through a food mill, or whizz them quickly in a food processor. Heat a saucepan over medium-high heat for a minute, then add olive oil, rosemary and red pepper and shake to combine. Cook for another minute, then add onion, thyme, cumin, cinnamon, cayenne and bay leaf and sauté until the onions are translucent, approximately 5 to 7 minutes. Add tomatoes, sugar, orange juice and peel, along with salt and pepper.
4. Cook for 8 to 10 minutes over medium-low heat, until reduced by a third. Adjust seasoning.
5. Pour the tomato sauce into a large baking dish that you can put on the table. Transfer the meatballs to the sauce, putting them about ½ inch from each other. Bake for 15 or 20 minutes, until the sauce is bubbling and the meatballs are cooked through.
6. Top with crumbled feta and scattered mint.

YIELD Yield: 4 servings.