

Swedish Meat Balls

I grew up with Norwegian holiday traditions. Our Christmas Eve meal was always lutefisk and boiled potatoes with lefse. Mom would add Swedish meatballs to the meal to make the kids happy. The meatballs (and not the lutefisk) have stuck around as a reminder of my Scandinavian heritage.

This meatball recipe works well with either ground plant-based “meat” or optional ground meat of choice. **Preparation Time: 2 hours - Servings: 4-6**

Organize Your Ingredients!

Notes on Organizing

Plan to organize ingredients on small plates or in bowls so they are easy to add. Prep 2 C. chopped onion: 1 C. for the meatballs and 1 C. for the gravy. Prep 2 cloves chopped garlic: 1 clove garlic for the meatballs and 1 clove for the vegetables.

Swedish Meatballs

1 clove garlic (smashed and chopped)
1 C. yellow onion (finely chopped)
1 C. unseasoned bread crumbs
- or -
1 C. crushed saltine crackers (unsalted if you can find them)
1 tsp. dry oregano leaves
2 tsp. dry basil leaves
1 tsp. ground black pepper
1 tsp. nutmeg

16 oz. plant-based ground “meat”
- or -
8 oz. ground turkey breast
and
8 oz. lean ground beef

1 egg (lightly whisked)
1/4 C. low-sodium veggie broth

2 tsp. canola oil (for cooking meatballs)

White Gravy

1 tsp. olive oil
1 C. onion (chopped)
9 oz. cremini mushrooms (sliced)
1/2 C. white wine

another 1/2 C. white wine
1 bay leaf
1/2 C. low-sodium veggie broth
1-1/2 C. nonfat milk

Flour Roux

1/4 C. all purpose flour - blended with
an additional 3/4 C. nonfat milk

1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. black pepper

1/2 C. plain, nonfat yogurt (stirred)

Potatoes/Vegetables/Cranberries

6 russet potatoes (peeled, cut into 2” pieces)

Vegetables

1 tsp. olive oil
1/2 red bell pepper (sliced into thin strips)
1 clove garlic (smashed and chopped)
4 C. fresh broccoli (washed and chopped)
1 tsp. butter
2 T. lemon juice

one 15 oz. can whole cranberry sauce

Let's Prepare, Cook, and Plate This!

Basic Assembly Instructions

As might be expected, you will devote most of the time to the meatballs. Hold the meatballs and gravy in a warm oven as you finish preparing the rest of the meal; their flavors will just improve. The meat and meatless gravies are made in the same way. You'll just add browned mushrooms and onion to the meatless gravy.

Preheat oven to 350°

Swedish Meatballs

1. Measure garlic, onion, breadcrumbs (or saltine crackers), and spices into a large bowl.
2. Add plant-based product or meat option, whisked egg and broth. Mix well with your hands.
3. Form into 1" balls. Make about 2 dozen balls before you begin cooking. Continue shaping balls as you cook.
4. Heat canola oil in a large cast-iron skillet or sauté pan and roll meatballs in hot pan until well browned. As meatballs are browned, transfer to an oven-safe bowl or large baking dish. Continue until all meatballs are browned. Slide meatballs into a 350° oven for 15 minutes.

White Gravy

- For Meatless gravy, using a separate pan, start by thoroughly browning onions and mushrooms in oil over medium-high heat. Add white wine. Bring to a boil and cook while rubbing the pan bottom to bring up brownings. Continue until wine cooks away. Set aside. (The rest of the recipe applies to both meat and meatless options.)

1. Remove 3 meatballs from oven. Using the original pan, mash the 3 balls and toss until crumbled meat is well browned. Add white wine and bring to a boil. Add a bay leaf. Rub pan bottom with a fork to bring up all brownings. (If eating meatless, add mushroom/onions mixture now.)
2. Add broth and milk and return to boil. Thicken with flour/milk roux. Reduce heat to low and cook 10-minutes, stirring often.
3. Add nutmeg, salt and pepper. Pour gravy over meatballs. Keep in a warming oven until ready to dine. Gently fold yogurt into meatballs and gravy just before serving.

Potatoes/Vegetables/ Cranberries/Serve

Potatoes

1. Gently boil potatoes in 2 C. of salted water for 10-15 minutes (until tender). Drain and place in a covered bowl in warm oven.

Vegetables and Cranberries

2. Sauté red bell peppers and garlic in oil for about 1-minute. Set aside.
3. Steam broccoli 4 minutes over boiling water. Place steamed broccoli in the pan with red peppers/ garlic mixture. Add butter and lemon juice. Toss well to heat through.
4. Place meatballs, gravy, potatoes, broccoli and cranberries in individual bowls and serve the meal family style.

What I've Learned from this Recipe

The difference between Swedish meatballs and Italian meatballs is the choice between white gravy or red sauce as well as spices. The Swedish-style (Northern European) utilizes a dairy-based gravy while the Italians (Southern European) use tomato-based sauce. The Swedish version utilizes nutmeg in the flavor profile.