



Marinara Sauce with Drop Meatballs



Ingredients, Meatballs:

- 22 square saltines
- 1 cup milk
- 2 lbs 85 percent lean ground beef
- 2 oz Parmesan cheese, grated (1 cup)
- 1 t. garlic powder
- 1 t. dried oregano
- ½ t. pepper

Ingredients, Sauce:

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 10 garlic cloves, peeled and smashed
- ½ t. red pepper flakes
- 2 (28 ounce) cans crushed tomatoes
- Salt and pepper
- 3 T. chopped fresh basil

Method:

1. For the meatballs: Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Place saltines in a large zip lock bag, seal bag, and crush saltines fine with a rolling pin (you should have 1 cup.) Combine saltines and milk in a large bowl and let sit for 5 minutes for saltines to soften. Mash with fork until smooth paste forms.
2. Add beef, Parmesan, garlic powder, oregano, salt and pepper to saltine mixture and mix with your hands until thoroughly combined. Divide meat mixture into 24 scant ¼ cup portions. Roll portions between your wet hands to form balls. Transfer to plate, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to use. (Meatballs can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.)
3. For the sauce: Combine oil and garlic in a large Dutch oven. Cook over low heat until the garlic is soft and golden on all sides, 10 to 12 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add pepper flakes and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in tomatoes and 1 teaspoon salt. Nestle meatballs into sauce. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat.
4. Cover and bake until meatballs are cooked through and tender, about 40 minutes. Let cool, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Gently stir in basil and season with salt and pepper to taste.