

Spaghetti & Plant-Based "Meat" Balls

Swick

Serves 1 | Active Time: 40 minutes | Total Time: 1 hour

Step 1: Preparing Your Mise en Place

- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 1 cup diced onion
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 cup chopped cremini mushrooms
- 1 cup cooked black beans*
- 1 cup packed baby spinach
- 1/2 cup sunflower seeds
- 2 tsp dried basil
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp chili flakes
- 1/4 cup pitted Kalamata olives (optional)
- 3 tbsp toasted pine nuts (optional)
- 3 tbsp sun-dried tomatoes (optional)
- 3 to 4 cups Tomato Sauce*

To prepare your mise en place, be sure you have one cup of cooked and chilled (or frozen) rice.

Dice the onion, mince the garlic and roughly chop the mushrooms. *Note: Separate the black beans into two 1/2 cup portions. Lastly, gather the spinach and spices.

For added flavor, add Kalamata olives, pine nuts and/or sun-dried tomatoes. To prepare these items, roughly chop them and set aside.

*NOTE: Be sure you have some Tomato Sauce on hand before you start. Alternatively, you could make an Arrabbiata Sauce for this recipe.

Step 2: Preparing the Meatball Mixture

- 1 tbsp oil (grapeseed or olive oil)*

*Note: If desired, omit the oil and dry sauté the onions with a bit of vegetable stock or water.

To prepare the meatballs, heat a large fry pan over medium heat. Once it is hot, add the onions and let cook until translucent and just starting to color. Add the garlic and cook for another 30 seconds or so. Add the mushrooms and then cover and let cook for a few minutes. Remove the lid and add the spinach. Cover and continue to cook for another minute or so. You are just looking to extract the moisture from the mushrooms and spinach—the spinach should still be nice and green. Once all of the moisture has evaporated from the pan, add the spices.

Meanwhile, pulse the sunflower seeds in a food processor until coarsely ground.

Next, add the cooked vegetable mixture and half of the beans (1/2 cup) and pulse just until the mixture comes together.

Place this mixture into a large bowl and add the remaining black beans and rice. Mix to combine. If adding the additional olives, pine nuts and/or sun-dried tomatoes, add those at this point. They can be added earlier but adding them at this stage allows them to be a bit more prominent in the meatballs. They also provide nice texture. Mix to combine all of the ingredients. Taste for seasoning and if needed, add a bit of salt.

Step 3: Forming and Cooking the Meatballs

To cook the meatballs, preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).

NOTE: This makes approximately 16 meatballs, depending on their size.

To roll the balls, form them into approximately 1-ounce balls (about 1 1/2 inches) or whatever size you prefer. As you make the balls, place them onto a parchment lined baking sheet—or simply spray a baking sheet with oil.

Bake the meatballs for approximately 30 minutes or until crisp on the outside and hot all the way through. If desired, you can turn the meatballs halfway through cooking to brown the other side.

Meanwhile, get ready to cook the pasta.

Step 4: Cooking the Pasta & Heating the Sauce

- 300-400 g gluten-free spaghetti noodles*
- 6 L/qt cold water
- sea salt (1 tsp salt per L/qt of water)

*Note: Regular pasta can be used instead of gluten-free pasta, if desired. The type or shape of pasta you use is up to you. Typically, meatballs are served with spaghetti, but fettuccine or linguini can be used, if you prefer.

How much pasta you cook depends on how hungry people are. As a guide, you should allow 75g to 115g/3oz to 4oz dried pasta per person.

To cook the pasta, follow the cooking times on the package. Just be sure to use plenty of boiling, salted water and cook until al dente (if using dried pasta).

Meanwhile, bring the tomato sauce to a gentle boil and then turn the heat down to low and let gently simmer.

Once the pasta has cooked, drain and return to the pot. Add enough tomato sauce to lightly coat the noodles. Next, add the meatballs and very gently toss.

Alternatively, the meatballs can be gently tossed with a bit of sauce in a separate bowl—just be gentle with them so they don't fall apart.

Serve immediately in warmed pasta bowls and enjoy!