
SPICY PORK MEATBALLS

With just enough spice to tickle the tongue, these balls are the ultimate crowd-pleasers. Whenever we have a large event to cook for, we always bring these. In terms of the meat for these balls, ask your butcher to grind some pork shoulder. It's inexpensive and full of flavor, and it's a cut we really love. Instead of using bread crumbs, as we do with most meatballs, we use cut-up, soft, fresh white bread. It makes for a lighter meatball. The ideal way to serve these is over a bed of Creamy Polenta (page 000) with a hearty ladleful of Spicy Meat Sauce (page 000).

Makes about 2 dozen 1½-inch meatballs

2 TABLESPOONS OLIVE OIL

2 POUNDS PORK SHOULDER, GROUND

1 TABLESPOON PLUS 1 TEASPOON SALT

4 JARRED HOT CHERRY PEPPERS, MINCED

¼ CUP HOT CHERRY PEPPER PICKLING LIQUID

4 SLICES FRESH WHITE BREAD, MINCED

3 LARGE EGGS

❖ Preheat the oven to 450°F. Drizzle the olive oil into a 9 x 13-inch baking dish and use your hand to evenly coat the entire surface. Set aside.

❖ Combine the ground pork, salt, cherry peppers, pickling liquid, bread, and eggs in a large mixing bowl and mix by hand until thoroughly incorporated.

❖ Roll the mixture into round, golf ball-size meatballs (about 1½ inches), 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 20 minutes, or until the meatballs are firm and cooked through. A meat thermometer inserted into the center of a meatball should read 165°F.

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