

SUNDAY SAUCE

Recipe by: Holley Barreto

Serves: at least 8, probably more!

Most traditional Italian American Sunday sauces (also known as gravy) are made with a mix of meats: meatballs, Italian sausage, pork, braciolo. My family and I prefer meatballs, so that's what I usually make. If you'd like to add other meat, brown it along with the meatballs, then add to the sauce. Add pork to the sauce when there are only 2 hours of cooking time left to prevent it from falling apart. You'll want to increase the amount of sauce ingredients if increasing the quantity of meat, however. Use your very biggest pot! If you have any parmesan rinds, add them to the sauce while simmering to add extra flavor. Sauce freezes beautifully. I usually make half the amount of pasta called for and freeze about half the sauce and meatballs for another meal.

INGREDIENTS

Sauce:

- 28 ounce can tomato puree
- 28 ounce can crushed tomatoes
- 6 ounce can tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon dried basil

Meatballs:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 pounds ground beef (best with 80% or 85% lean beef)
- 2 large eggs, beaten lightly
- 2 cups Italian breadcrumbs
- 1 cup grated parmesan or romano cheese
- 2 tablespoons onion powder
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 tablespoons dried parsley flakes (or 2 handfuls fresh parsley, minced)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup red wine

For serving:

- 2 pounds dried pasta of choice
- Additional grated parmesan or romano cheese

DIRECTIONS

For the sauce: In a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot, whisk together ingredients for sauce. Bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce heat to medium low and cover until ready to add meatballs.

For the meatballs: Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Pour 1 tablespoon olive oil onto a large rimmed baking sheet; spread across pan evenly with either your hand or a brush. Set aside.

Place next 7 ingredients (ground beef through parsley) in a large bowl. Mix together thoroughly using the best kitchen tool your momma gave you: your hands. Once mixture is a uniform consistency, break off a 2-inch chunk, then roll into a ball. (Again, use your hands! I use mine as a measurement guide, and make sure my chunk of meat is about as long as the tip of my index finger to my second knuckle). Place rolled ball onto prepared baking sheet and repeat. You'll end up with around 28 meatballs.

Once all the meatballs are formed, drizzle the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil evenly across the top of them. Place pan in oven and bake for 8 minutes or until a light brown crust has formed on the bottom of the meatballs. Remove pan from oven, flip meatballs over, then return pan to oven for an additional 8 minutes so the other side also develops a crust. Remove pan from oven and add the meatballs to the sauce.

Immediately pour the wine onto the pan you used to bake the meatballs. Carefully place it back in the oven for 3 minutes or until wine has become hot and steamy. Remove the pan from oven (again, carefully!) and use a heatproof spatula or wooden spoon to scrape up any brown bits that were stuck on the pan. Pour wine and drippings into the sauce, scraping the pan again if necessary, and stir to coat meatballs thoroughly.

Cover pan with a splatter shield and simmer very gently for 3 hours, stirring occasionally. Your goal is for the sauce to sputter gently every few seconds; adjust heat as needed. Sauce is ready when it has thickened substantially and the meatballs' internal temperature measures 165 degrees.

For the pasta: About 15 minutes prior to eating, cook pasta according to package instructions. Before draining, stir $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pasta cooking water into the sauce. Drain pasta. If desired, add a couple ladlefuls of the sauce to the pasta to pre-sauce it a bit. Or just pile the plain pasta on a plate, top with meatballs and sauce, shower with grated cheese, and dig in.