



*What do these meatballs have going for them? Everything! They are quick to make, they stay moist, they reheat nicely, and you can use any ground meat that you wish! Plus, there's no frying, which means little mess and easy clean-up! You must try this recipe!*

### **Fill in the Blank Meatballs**

I call these Fill-in-the-Blank Meatballs because you can use beef, chicken, turkey or pork! The rest of the ingredients work well with any of the ground meats, and the meatballs cook quickly, freeze well, and reheat easily. My favorite is turkey. My husband really likes chicken. I keep bags of meatballs in the freezer for fast weeknight dinners, and I've been known to make big batches for a local program that feeds people in need. Everybody loves meatballs!

### **Ingredients**

- 1 to 1.25 pounds of ground (fill in the blank) meat, poultry
- 1 Tablespoon of Montreal Steak Seasoning (or a blend of ground pepper and salt)
- 1 Tablespoon sambal oelek (or crushed red pepper)
- 1/2 cup red or green bell pepper in very small dice
- 1 egg whisked
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 cup of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese
- 1/2 cup bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup chopped parsley, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil (may need more, so keep it handy)

I think this recipe works best if you add ingredients in this order.

Work with a large bowl. To the bowl, add the bread crumbs, cheese, steak seasoning (or salt and pepper), parsley, and small bits of bell pepper. Mix all of this around so that it is evenly blended.

Now add the meat, kind of breaking it apart as you add it to the bowl.

Whisk the egg in a small (separate) bowl. Add the Worcestershire sauce and sambal oelek to the egg, and whisk again. Now pour the mixture over the top of the meat.

Add the extra virgin olive oil. Keep the oil handy.

Go in with your hands! Mix everything evenly and lightly. Don't pack the meat. Make a test ball. Form it gently. If it holds together, you are good to go! If it feels dry and won't hold together, add another (small) splash of olive oil to the mixture. Go slowly with additions. You don't want greasy meatballs.

When the meat will hold together in a lightly packed ball, it's time to go into production! Make the meatballs! I use my hands, but you could use a scoop.

So -- because we count carbs in our house, I actually weigh the meatballs so that they are equal in size. That makes the math a lot easier. I suspect most of you won't do this, but if you do, I go for meatballs that are 1.4 to 1.5 ounces. This typically yields 17 meatballs.

If you're not a food weigher, I suggest that you divide the mixture into 3 equal portions, and then take each portion, and divide each into 6 same-sized meatballs (yield 18). It's important to have like-sized meatballs so that they cook evenly.

Clearly, you can make the meatballs bigger or smaller as you wish, depending on how many you want to serve. Just make them all the same size.

Preheat your oven to 425 degrees. Line a baking sheet with foil (makes clean up easier), and use a baking rack that has been sprayed with cooking spray. If you don't have a baking rack, no worries, just put your meatballs on the foil.

Bake for 17 minutes. Then check temperature with a thermometer. The goal is 165 degrees F. Please note: I have a convection oven, and I bake the meatballs with convection heat. If you are not using a convection oven, your meatballs might take a few minutes longer. The cooking time depends completely on your oven, and the size of the meatballs. Remember, mine are about 1.5 ounces, but if yours are bigger or smaller, the cooking time will vary.

Therefore, check the meatballs after 15 minutes (earlier if your meatballs are small). Aim for an internal temperature of 165 degrees.

Eat immediately, or do what I do! Put the meatballs on a dish, cover loosely with foil, let them cool, and then stick them in the fridge. When it's dinnertime, re-heat them gently for an hour in red sauce (to go with spaghetti or to make super delicious meatball subs)! They come out juicy and piping hot!

You also can freeze the meatballs in a plastic freezer bag after the initial baking. Just let the meatballs cool completely before putting them in the freezer. Thaw overnight in the fridge. Reheat in sauce or in your oven or microwave.

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