

Baked Chicken Meatballs with Fresh Tomato Sauce

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ lbs ground chicken
- ½ cup Italian breadcrumbs (or half panko for lighter texture)
- 3 tbsp finely grated onion
- 1½ tbsp Italian seasoning
- ¾ cup grated parmesan cheese
- ¾ tsp salt
- ¾ tsp pepper
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 egg + 1 egg yolk
- Zest of ½-1 lemon
- 3 tbsp milk (keeps them tender)
- 1½ tbsp olive oil
- 1 (28 oz) can Tuttorosso Crushed Tomatoes
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- ¾-1 tsp salt (to taste)
- ½ tsp pepper
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- ½ tsp honey
- 1-2 tsp fresh lemon juice
- ½ cup water or broth
- ¾-1 cup shredded mozzarella
- Fresh grated parmesan
- Fresh basil

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
2. Make the meatball mixture by combining the ground chicken, breadcrumbs, grated onion, Italian seasoning, parmesan, salt, pepper, garlic, egg + egg yolk, lemon zest, milk, and olive oil in a large bowl. Mix gently until just combined.
3. Prepare the sauce in a 9x13 baking dish. Add the crushed tomatoes, garlic, olive oil, tomato paste, Italian seasoning, salt, pepper, red pepper flakes, honey, lemon juice, and water or broth. Stir until smooth and combined.
4. Form the meatballs into slightly larger balls (about 2-3 tablespoons each) and place them directly into the sauce. Gently press them down slightly, leaving the tops exposed.
5. Bake uncovered for 18-20 minutes, or until the meatballs are cooked through and the sauce is bubbling.
6. Add the mozzarella over the top and return to the oven for 3-5 minutes until melted.
7. Broil for 1-2 minutes if desired, until the cheese is lightly golden and bubbly.
8. Finish and serve with fresh basil, grated parmesan, and a drizzle of olive oil if desired. Serve with pasta, crusty bread, or over polenta.