

Mini Meatball Minestrone Soup: Hearty, Healthy & Easy Comfort Food!

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TIME
5-7 min

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INGREDIENTS

For the Mini Meatballs: $\frac{1}{2}$ lb lean ground beef or pork (or a mix)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely crushed breadcrumbs
 1 large egg, beaten
 1 tbsp grated Parmesan cheese
 1 tsp Italian seasoning
 Salt and black pepper, to taste

For the Soup: 2 tbsp olive oil
 1 medium onion, diced
 2 carrots, peeled and diced
 2 celery stalks, diced
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1 (28 oz) can crushed tomatoes
 6 cups vegetable or beef broth (low-sodium recommended)
 1 (15 oz) can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
 1 cup small pasta (such as ditalini, small shells, or elbow macaroni)
 1 cup chopped zucchini or green beans
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh spinach, chopped (optional)
 Salt and black pepper to taste
 Optional garnish: grated Parmesan cheese, fresh parsley

DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare Mini Meatballs: In a medium bowl, combine the $\frac{1}{2}$ lb ground beef or pork, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely crushed breadcrumbs, 1 large beaten egg, 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese, 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning, and salt and black pepper to taste. Mix gently until just combined. Using your hands or a small spoon, roll the mixture into mini meatballs, about $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter. Set aside.
2. Sauté Vegetables: In a large pot or Dutch oven, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat. Add the diced onion, diced carrots, and diced celery. Sauté for 5-7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are softened. Add the minced garlic and cook for another 1 minute until fragrant, being careful not to burn it.
3. Build the Soup Base: Stir in the 1 (28 oz) can crushed tomatoes and 6 cups vegetable or beef broth. Bring the soup to a gentle simmer.
4. Add Meatballs & Simmer: Carefully add the prepared mini meatballs to the simmering soup. Reduce the heat to low, cover the pot, and let the soup simmer for 15 minutes. This allows the meatballs to cook through and the flavors to meld.
5. Add Pasta & Remaining Veggies: Add the 1 cup small pasta (such as ditalini) and 1 cup chopped zucchini or green beans to the soup. Continue to simmer, uncovered, for another 10-15 minutes, or until the pasta is al dente and the vegetables are tender. If the soup becomes too thick, add a splash more broth or water.
6. Finish & Serve: Stir in the $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fresh spinach (optional) and cook until just wilted, about

1-2 minutes. Taste the soup and adjust seasoning with additional salt and black pepper as needed. Ladle the warm, hearty Mini Meatball Minestrone Soup into bowls. Garnish with extra grated Parmesan cheese and fresh chopped parsley, if desired. Serve immediately and enjoy!

SWAPS & NOTES

Ground Meat: Use lean ground beef, ground pork, or a mix for the meatballs.

For a lighter option, ground chicken or turkey can be used.

Breadcrumbs: Plain breadcrumbs or Panko breadcrumbs work well for the meatballs.

Cheese (Meatballs): Grated Parmesan cheese adds flavor to the meatballs.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Mini Meatball Size: Keep meatballs small so they cook quickly and are easy to eat in a spoon.

Don't Overmix Meatballs: Mix just until combined to ensure tender meatballs.

Sauté Veggies Properly: Taking time to soften the mirepoix builds a good flavor foundation for the soup.

Add Pasta Correctly: If cooking pasta directly in the soup, stir occasionally to prevent sticking.

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