

Easy One-Pan Creamy Parmesan Meatballs and Penne (Family Favorite)

There are nights when only a big, warm bowl of pasta will do, and this



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1 min

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INGREDIENTS

For the Meatballs:

The Meat: 1 lb ground beef (80/20 or 90/10).

Binders: 1/4 cup breadcrumbs and 1 egg.

Aromatics: 2 garlic cloves (minced) and 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese.

Seasoning: 1 tsp Italian seasoning, plus salt and pepper to taste.

For the Sauce:

The Roux: 2 tbsp butter and 2 tbsp all-purpose flour.

The Creamy Base: 3 cups milk and 1 cup heavy cream.

The Flavor: 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, 1/2 tsp paprika, and salt/pepper.

For the Pasta:

The Foundation: 12 oz penne pasta.

The Garnish: Fresh parsley.

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Prepare and Sear the Meatballs:** In a large bowl, combine the ground beef, breadcrumbs, egg, garlic, Parmesan, and Italian seasoning. Roll the mixture into small, uniform meatballs (about 1 inch). Heat a drizzle of oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Sear the meatballs until they are golden-brown on all sides and cooked through. Remove them from the skillet and set aside.
- 2. Boil the Penne:** While your meatballs are searing, cook the penne in a large pot of heavily salted water according to the package instructions. Aim for al dente-the pasta will soften slightly once it hits the hot sauce. Drain and set aside.
- 3. Make the Creamy Sauce:** Don't wash that skillet! Melt the butter over medium heat. Whisk in the flour and cook for about 1 minute-this gets rid of the raw flour taste. Gradually whisk in the milk and heavy cream. Continue stirring constantly over medium heat until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon. Stir in the Parmesan, paprika, salt, and pepper until the sauce is smooth and glossy.
- 4. Combine and Toss:** Add the cooked penne to the skillet and toss vigorously so every tube is coated in the Parmesan cream. Gently fold in the cooked meatballs, being careful not to break them.
- 5. Serve and Garnish:** Plate the pasta while it's steaming hot and garnish with a generous sprinkle of fresh parsley and perhaps an extra dusting of Parmesan.

SWAPS & NOTES

The Meat: You can substitute ground turkey or chicken for the beef.

If you do, I recommend adding an extra teaspoon of olive oil to the mix to keep the meatballs moist.

The Pasta: While penne is great for "trapping" the sauce, fusilli or rigatoni are also excellent choices for a creamy dish.

The Sauce: For an even richer flavor, use whole milk.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

The Whisk is Your Friend: When adding the milk to your flour and butter (the roux), add it slowly and whisk constantly to avoid lumps.

Small Meatballs: Keeping the meatballs small (bite-sized) ensures they distribute evenly through the pasta, giving you a bit of everything in every forkful.

Save the Pasta Water: Before draining your penne, save a half-cup of the starchy water.

If your sauce gets too thick while you're assembling, a splash of this water will thin it out while keeping it silky.

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Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/easy-one-pan-creamy-parmesan-meatballs-and-penne-family-favorite/>