

Lemony Chicken Ricotta Meatballs Over Garlic Spinach Orzo That Feel Fresh and Comforting

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TIME
8 to 10 min

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INGREDIENTS

For the Meatballs:

- 1 pound ground chicken
- 1/2 cup ricotta cheese
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano

Salt and pepper to taste

For the Orzo and Finish:

- 2 cups orzo pasta
- 2 cups fresh spinach
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes, optional
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese, for serving

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, combine the ground chicken, ricotta cheese, Parmesan cheese, egg, lemon zest, minced garlic, dried oregano, salt, and pepper. Mix until just combined.
2. Form the mixture into small meatballs, about 1 to 1 1/2 inches in size.
3. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the meatballs and cook, turning occasionally, until golden brown and cooked through, about 8 to 10 minutes. Remove and set aside.
4. Meanwhile, cook the orzo in salted boiling water according to package instructions. Drain and set aside.
5. In the same skillet, add the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. Add the spinach, red pepper flakes if using, and a pinch of salt. Cook until the spinach is wilted.
6. Add the cooked orzo to the skillet and toss to combine with the spinach.
7. Stir in the lemon juice and half of the chopped parsley. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper.
8. Return the meatballs to the skillet and gently toss to combine, or serve them over the orzo.
9. Garnish with the remaining parsley and extra : Parmesan cheese before serving.

SWAPS & NOTES

Ricotta is the secret to especially tender meatballs here, so

it is worth using if possible.

If you want a slightly firmer texture, you can reduce it just a bit, but the creamy texture is part of what makes this recipe special.

Fresh spinach wilts quickly and blends beautifully into the orzo,

but baby spinach works just as well.

If you want even more greens, you can stir in a little extra at the end.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Do not overmix the meatball mixture.

Ground chicken stays more tender when handled lightly.

If the mixture feels a little soft, you can chill it for 10 to 15 minutes before shaping the meatballs.

That can make them easier to handle.

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