Turkey Meatballs with Roasted Red Pepper Orzo

12 meatballs; 3 per serving over one quarter of the orzo | Active 25 min | Cook 25 min | Total 45 min

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lb 93%-lean ground turkey (680 g)
- 1/2 cup part-skim ricotta (120 g)
- 1/2 cup plain dry breadcrumbs (50 g)
- 1 large egg (50 g without shell)
- 1/3 cup finely grated Parmesan (30 g), divided equally between meatballs and sauce
- 2 garlic cloves, finely grated (6 g), divided
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano (1 g)
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt (3 g), divided
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper (1 g)
- 1 1/2 cups dry orzo (280 g)
- 1 1/2 cups drained jarred roasted red peppers (240 g)
- 1/2 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth (120 ml)
- 2 teaspoons olive oil (10 ml)
- 1/2 cup reserved pasta cooking water (120 ml)

Set out

Rimmed baking sheet, Baking parchment, Mixing bowl, Blender, Medium saucepan, Food thermometer

Allergens

Milk, Egg, Wheat; check broth and jarred pepper labels. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Heat oven to 425°F/220°C and line the sheet with parchment. Mix turkey, ricotta, breadcrumbs, egg, half the Parmesan, half the garlic, oregano, half the salt and all the black pepper just until combined.

2. Shape into 12 equal meatballs and arrange on the tray. Wash hands and raw-meat tools. Roast for 18–22 minutes, until centers of the largest meatballs reach 165°F/74°C.

3. Meanwhile, bring a saucepan of water to a boil. Cook orzo according to its package until just tender. Before draining, reserve 1/2 cup/120 ml cooking water.

4. Blend drained peppers and broth until smooth. Heat oil in the empty saucepan over medium-low heat; stir in remaining garlic for 30 seconds. Add pepper mixture and remaining salt; simmer for 3 minutes.

5. Stir drained orzo, remaining Parmesan and all the measured reserved pasta water into the sauce. Warm gently for 1–2 minutes; it should be loose and saucy. Divide into four portions and place three cooked meatballs on each.

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Estimated nutrition per serving

Calories: 695 kcal | Protein: 50.9 g | Carbohydrate: 68.9 g | Fat: 23.9 g | Fiber: 3.7 g. One of 4 servings. Batch yield: 12 meatballs; 3 per serving over one quarter of the orzo. Base ingredients and full measured oil included; optional variations excluded. Estimates vary with brands, cooking and actual portions.

Portions that survive the next-day container

Pack three meatballs with one quarter of the pasta while it is still easy to divide, then chill promptly. Keep a little empty space in the container so the orzo can be stirred during reheating. A tightly packed box is harder to heat evenly through the center.

A useful detail

Finely grated Parmesan distributes more evenly than coarse shreds. The pepper sauce should look slightly looser in the pan than you want on the plate because the orzo keeps absorbing it.

Another way

Use 680 g ground chicken instead of turkey, keeping the 12-meatball yield and cooking every center to 165°F/74°C.

Replace orzo with 280 g dry small shells and save the same amount of cooking water.

Keep it well

Refrigerate meatballs and orzo in shallow containers within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C, at 40°F/4°C or below for up to 3 days. Add water to loosen orzo and reheat all components to 165°F/74°C. Freeze meatballs with a little sauce for up to 2 months; thaw in the refrigerator.