

POLPETTINE DI VITELLONE (RICH MEATBALLS IN TOMATO SAUCE)

These are very easy to make, and are perfect eaten at room temperature as well as when hot. We tend to eat them as part of a type of tapas lunch, with some aubergine fritters, a frittata of some description, some couscous salad and some focaccia bread – but they would be equally good on spaghetti.

When I first saw the ingredients, I thought something was missing from the list – because I didn't believe they could taste so good – but there's nothing missing!

INGREDIENTS

300g minced beef – ask your butcher to mince you some very lean, tender beef if you can

2 cloves of garlic

1 egg

1 tbsp tomato paste

1 tsp dried oregano

1 tsp sherry or red wine vinegar

1 tsp salt

Pepper – to taste

2 tbsp butter

1 tbsp olive oil

1 tin of plum tomatoes – good quality

2 tbsp olive oil

1 tsp sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

Put the minced beef into a large bowl and add finely chopped garlic, egg, tomato paste, oregano, vinegar, salt and pepper. Mix thoroughly (I find hands are best). Form the mixture into quite small meat balls – about a dessert spoon full for each ball. If your hands get too sticky, wet them slightly when forming the meatballs.

Melt the butter and 1 tbsp oil in a deep frying or sauté pan, and fry the meatballs over a reasonably high heat until they are sealed on all sides.

Mix the tin of tomatoes with the olive oil and sugar, and pour over the meatballs. Cook for about 10 minutes, until the sauce reduces and thickens a little, and then leave to rest until you are ready to eat. Be careful not to stir too much, or the meatballs could break up.

I know the butter seems a little over the top – but I've never tried it without and suspect that it wouldn't be as good!