

Soutzoukakia - Σουτζουκάκια (soutzoukakia)



Spiced meatballs made from ground beef or lamb, simmered in a tomato and red wine sauce. Also known as Smyrna Meatballs.

SERVES	PREP	COOK	TOTAL	CUISINE
Serves 4	25 minutes	50 minutes	1 hour 15 minutes	Greek

Ingredients

- 500 g (1 lb 2 oz) minced beef, or a mix of beef and lamb
- 1 small onion, finely grated
- 2 garlic cloves, finely grated
- 50 ml (3 tbsp + 1 tsp) red wine
- 1 slice day-old bread, crusts removed and soaked in water, then squeezed dry
- 1 large egg
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp sweet paprika
- 1 tbsp finely chopped flat-leaf parsley



- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tbsp plain flour, for shaping and dusting
- 3 tbsp olive oil, for frying
- [For the sauce] 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 400 g (14 oz) tinned chopped tomatoes
- 250 ml (9 fl oz) red wine
- 250 ml (9 fl oz) water or light stock
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Method

1. Put the minced meat, grated onion, grated garlic, red wine, squeezed bread, egg, olive oil, cumin, paprika, parsley, salt and pepper into a large bowl. Mix thoroughly with your hands for 2 to 3 minutes, until the mixture is cohesive and slightly sticky.
2. Cover the bowl and rest the mixture in the fridge for 20 minutes so it firms up and the flavours settle.
3. Meanwhile, make the sauce. Heat 2 tbsp olive oil in a wide pan over medium heat for 2 minutes, then add the chopped onion and cook for 6 to 8 minutes, stirring, until soft and translucent.
4. Add the chopped garlic and tomato purée and cook over medium heat for 1 minute, stirring, until fragrant and the purée darkens slightly.
5. Pour in the red wine and simmer over medium-high heat for 2 to 3 minutes, scraping up any sticky bits, until the alcohol smell has cooked off.
6. Add the chopped tomatoes, water or stock, bay leaf, sugar and oregano. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat, then reduce to low and cook for 20 minutes, stirring now and then, until the sauce is slightly reduced and tastes rounded. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
7. Shape the meat mixture into oval, finger-length meatballs about 6 cm long and lightly roll each one in plain flour, shaking off the excess. You should have 12 to 14 pieces.



8. Heat the 3 tbsp olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat for 2 minutes. Fry the soutzoukakia in batches for 2 to 3 minutes per side, until lightly browned but not cooked through.
9. Transfer the browned meatballs into the tomato sauce, nestling them in a single layer if possible. Spoon sauce over the top, cover partially, and simmer over low heat for 20 minutes, turning the meatballs once, until cooked through and tender and the sauce has thickened slightly.
10. Remove the bay leaf and let the dish rest off the heat for 5 minutes before serving so the sauce settles and the flavours deepen.

To serve

Serve the soutzoukakia in shallow bowls with plenty of sauce spooned over the top, alongside rice, mashed potatoes, or crusty bread. A simple green salad or boiled greens makes a good counterpart, and a dry red wine or a light beer works well.

