

Eggplant Meatballs

Yield: About 24 meatballs | **Active:** 35 minutes | **Total:** About 1 hour 45 minutes

Ingredients

- 3 medium eggplants (about 2 3/4-3 lb total)
- 1 tsp extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for garlic and pan
- 1 large garlic clove, roasted and mashed
- 2 1/4 cups well-drained roasted eggplant flesh (about 18 oz)
- 1 1/4 cups finely grated Pecorino Romano (about 4 1/2 oz)
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 1/4 cups fine dry breadcrumbs, plus more if needed
- 1 1/2 Tbsp basil pesto
- 1/2 tsp kosher salt and 1/4 tsp black pepper
- Oil for shallow-frying
- Warm marinara, Pecorino, and basil or scallions, for serving

Method

- 1.** Heat oven to 425 F. Prick eggplants, rub lightly with oil, and roast 45-60 minutes until collapsed. Roast the wrapped, oiled garlic during the final 20 minutes.
- 2.** Scoop out flesh and drain in a fine-mesh strainer 15-20 minutes. Press lightly, chop or mash, measure 2 1/4 cups, and cool.
- 3.** Gently fold together eggplant, Pecorino, egg, garlic, breadcrumbs, pesto, salt, and pepper.
- 4.** Rest 10 minutes. Cook one test meatball. Add breadcrumbs 1 Tbsp at a time only if needed; mixture should remain moist.
- 5.** Portion 24 pieces with a 2-Tbsp scoop. Roll gently and chill 15 minutes.
- 6.** Heat 1/4 inch oil to 350 F. Fry in batches, turning carefully, until deep golden, 5-7 minutes. Drain and season.
- 7.** Serve over warm marinara with Pecorino and herbs. For a softer finish, simmer gently in sauce for 5 minutes.

CHEF'S NOTES

The target texture is moist and tender, never wet or bready. Freeze shaped, uncooked meatballs for up to 2 months.