

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
 - Cook Time: 45 minutes
 - Total Time: 1 hour
 - Yield: 4 to 6 servings (Approx. 18-20 meatballs)
 - Intensity Level: Low to Medium (Requires basic mixing skills and gentle simmering)
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Ingredients

For the Meatballs:

- 1 lb (450g) lean ground beef (or a mix of beef and pork)
- ½ cup uncooked long-grain white rice (do not use instant rice)
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 small onion, finely grated or minced (about ¼ cup)
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped (optional)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

For the Sauce:

- 1 can (15 oz) tomato sauce
- 1 can (14.5 oz) diced tomatoes (undrained)

- 1 ½ cups water or beef broth
 - 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
 - 1 teaspoon granulated sugar (to balance acidity)
 - 1 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning
 - ½ teaspoon smoked paprika (optional, for depth)
 - Salt and pepper to taste
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Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Mixture

In a large mixing bowl, combine the ground beef, uncooked rice, beaten egg, minced onion, parsley, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Use your hands to mix the ingredients until just combined. Important: Do not overmix the meat, as this can result in tough meatballs. The mixture will be quite sticky, which is normal.

Step 2: Shape the Meatballs

Roll the mixture into 1 ½-inch balls (about the size of a golf ball). You should yield roughly 18 to 20 meatballs. If the mixture is too sticky to handle, wet your hands slightly with water before rolling. Place the formed meatballs on a plate or baking sheet.

Step 3: Brown the Meatballs (Optional but Recommended)

Note: This step adds flavor intensity but is not strictly necessary if you are short on time.

Heat 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil in a large skillet or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Carefully place the meatballs in the skillet (working in batches if necessary to avoid crowding). Sear for 2-3 minutes on each side until browned. Remove the meatballs from the pan and set aside. Drain excess fat, leaving about 1 tablespoon in the pan.

Step 4: Build the Sauce

In the same skillet (or a clean Dutch oven if you skipped browning), whisk together the tomato sauce, diced tomatoes with their juices, water (or broth), Worcestershire sauce, sugar, Italian seasoning, and smoked paprika. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally.

Step 5: Simmer and Cook

Gently nestle the raw (or browned) meatballs into the simmering sauce. The liquid should come about three-quarters of the way up the meatballs; if it doesn't, add a splash more water.

Reduce the heat to low, cover the skillet with a tight-fitting lid, and simmer gently for 35 to 40 minutes.

Intensity Check: It is crucial that the heat is low. A rolling boil will cause the meatballs to break apart and the rice to burst out of the meat. You want a slow, lazy bubble.

Step 6: The “Fluff” Test

To ensure the rice is fully cooked, remove one meatball from the pan and cut it in half. The rice should be tender and opaque, not crunchy. If the rice is still hard, add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and simmer for another 5-10 minutes.

Step 7: Serve

Remove the skillet from the heat and let it rest for 5 minutes. Season the sauce with additional salt and pepper if needed. Serve the meatballs hot, spooning the extra sauce over the top. They pair perfectly with creamy mashed potatoes, buttered egg noodles, or crusty bread.

Recipe Notes & Variations

- **Meat Choice:** While lean ground beef is traditional, you can substitute ground turkey or chicken for a lighter version. However, note that poultry is leaner, so the meatballs may be slightly less moist.
 - **Rice:** Use standard long-grain white rice. Do not use minute rice, as it will turn to mush during the long simmering process. Do not use brown rice, as it requires a much longer cooking time than the meat.
 - **Sauce Thickness:** If you prefer a thicker gravy, remove the lid during the last 10 minutes of cooking to allow the liquid to reduce.
 - **Freezer Friendly:** These meatballs freeze beautifully. Allow them to cool completely, then transfer them with the sauce into airtight containers. They will keep in the freezer for up to 3 months.
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Nutritional Information

Disclaimer: The following nutritional data is an estimate based on standard ingredients and is provided for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional dietary advice. Exact calculations will vary based on specific brands and portion sizes.

Serving Size: 4 Meatballs with sauce (Recipe serves 5)

- Calories: 310 kcal
- Total Fat: 10g (Saturated Fat: 4g)
- Cholesterol: 75mg
- Sodium: 780mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 28g (Dietary Fiber: 3g, Sugars: 8g)
- Protein: 24g
- Vitamin C: 15% DV
- Iron: 20% DV
- Calcium: 6% DV