Polpette .. Meatballs

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for the meatballs

400 g (14 oz) ground beef, not too lean

150 g (5-6 oz) stale bread

white wine

100 g (4 oz) grated cheese half *parmigiano* half *pecorino romano*

1 Tablespoon finely chopped capers

1 clove garlic ground to a paste

small bunch of finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

salt & pepper

1 egg beaten

Use your hands to mix all of the above adding the egg last. Add another egg if necessary to make a soft mixture. Form the meatballs into spheres, almost as big as a tennis ball.

to cook the meatballs

flour

olive oil

pass the meatballs through flour and brown on all sides in olive oil over medium high heat then add to the red sauce.

grilled: flatten the meatballs slightly and use toothpicks to attach them to lemon leaves on the top and bottom, grill over hot coals (try fig or chestnut leaves)

for the sauce

small onion chopped

olive oil

salt

tomato *passata* (puree)

sweet basil

Let the chopped onion wilt and turn golden before adding the tomato puree and salt. Let it come to a boil, turn it down to a simmer, add the meatballs and a few leaves of sweet basil and simmer for about 20-30 minutes until the meatballs are cooked through and sauce has reduced a bit. The sauce needs to cover only about 3/4 of the meatballs, turn them every now and again.

variations

..mix ground beef (lean) with ground pork (shoulder cut)

..soak the bread in water, milk or white wine

..use red pepper instead of black pepper

..options for flavorings are lemon zest, fresh flat leaf parsley, pine nuts and raisins, capers, nutmeg, etc.

..use any cheese or mixture of cheeses, *provalone del monaco* would be my first choice but I can’t get that where I live so I use half *parmigiano* and half *pecorino romano.*