

*Meatballs and Tomatoes (continued)*

teaspoon—the bread and milk mush, salt, and several grindings of black pepper. Gently knead the mixture with your hands without squeezing it. When all the ingredients are evenly combined, shape it gently and without squeezing into balls about 1 inch in diameter. Roll the balls lightly in the bread crumbs.

3. Choose a sauté pan that can subsequently accommodate all the meatballs in a single layer. Pour in enough vegetable oil to come  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch up the sides. Turn on the heat to medium high and when the oil is hot, slip in the meatballs. Sliding them in with a spatula will avoid splashing hot oil out of the pan. Brown the meatballs on all sides, turning them carefully so they won't break up.

4. Remove from heat, tip the pan slightly and with a spoon, remove as much of the fat as floats to the surface. Return the pan to the burner over medium heat, add the chopped tomatoes with their juice, a pinch of salt, and turn the meatballs over once or twice to coat them well. Cover the pan and adjust the heat to cook at a quiet, but steady simmer for about 20 to 25 minutes, until the oil floats free of the tomatoes. Taste and correct for salt and serve at once.

*Ahead-of-time note* ☺ The dish can be cooked entirely in advance and stored in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator for several days. Reheat gently before serving.

*Winter Meatballs with Savoy Cabbage**For 4 to 6 servings*

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup milk	2 tablespoons onion chopped very fine
A slice of good-quality white bread, trimmed of its crust	3 tablespoons freshly grated <i>parmigiano-reggiano</i> cheese
1 pound ground beef, preferably chuck	1 cup fine, dry, unflavored bread crumbs, spread on a plate
2 ounces <i>pancetta</i> chopped very fine	Vegetable oil
1 egg	$1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds Savoy cabbage
Salt	2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Black pepper, ground fresh from the mill	
1 tablespoon chopped parsley	

2 teaspoons chopped garlic	and cut up into coarse
$\frac{2}{3}$ cup canned imported Italian	pieces
plum tomatoes, drained	

1. Put the milk and bread in a small saucepan, and turn on the heat to low. When the bread has soaked up all the milk, mash it to a pulp with a fork. Remove from heat and allow to cool completely.

2. Put the ground meat, chopped *pancetta*, egg, salt, pepper, parsley, onion, grated Parmesan, and the bread and milk mush into a bowl. Gently knead the mixture with your hands without squeezing it. When all the ingredients are evenly combined, shape it gently and without squeezing into balls about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter. Roll the balls lightly in the bread crumbs.

3. Choose a sauté pan that can subsequently accommodate all the meatballs in a single layer. Pour in enough vegetable oil to come  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch up the sides. Turn on the heat to medium high and when the oil is hot, slip in the meatballs. Sliding them in with a spatula will avoid splashing hot oil out of the pan. Brown the meatballs on all sides, turning them carefully so they won't break up. When they are done, remove them from the pan with a slotted spoon or spatula and transfer them to a cooling rack to drain or to a platter lined with paper towels. Pour the oil from the pan, and wipe the pan dry with paper towels.

4. Discard any of the cabbage's bruised or blemished leaves. Detach the other leaves from the core, discarding the core, and shred them into strips about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch wide.

5. Put the olive oil and chopped garlic into the sauté pan, and turn on the heat to medium. Cook and stir the garlic until it becomes colored gold, then add all the shredded cabbage. Turn it over 2 or 3 times to coat it well, cover the pan, and turn the heat down to the minimum.

6. Cook for 40 minutes to 1 hour, turning the cabbage from time to time, until it has become very soft and it is reduced to one-third its original bulk. Add a liberal amount of salt and ground pepper, bearing in mind that the cabbage is very sweet and needs considerable seasoning. Taste and correct seasoning to suit.

7. Turn up the heat to medium, uncover the pan, and continue to cook the cabbage. When it becomes colored a light nut brown, add the cut-up tomatoes, stir to coat well, and cook for about 15 minutes. Return the meatballs to the pan, turning them over 2 or 3 times in the cabbage and tomatoes. Cover the pan, turn the heat down to low, and cook for 10 to 15 minutes, turning the contents over from time to time. Transfer the entire contents of the pan to a warm platter and serve at once.