



## MEATBALLS AND PASTA

Meatballs are fantastic! They're perfect like this, with a one-minute homemade tomato sauce and spaghetti, but you could also try them with rice, mashed potatoes, polenta or simple chunks of fresh crusty bread. I like to make meatballs with a mixture of beef and pork, as I think it gives a really wonderful flavour and texture.

### Serves 4 to 6

4 sprigs of fresh rosemary  
 12 Jacob's cream crackers  
 2 heaped teaspoons  
 Dijon mustard  
 500g good-quality minced beef,  
 pork, or a mixture of the two,  
 the best quality you can afford  
 1 heaped tablespoon  
 dried oregano  
 1 large egg, preferably free-  
 range or organic

sea salt and freshly ground  
 black pepper  
 olive oil  
 a bunch of fresh basil  
 1 medium onion  
 2 cloves of garlic  
 ½ a fresh or dried red chilli  
 2 x 400g tins of chopped  
 tomatoes  
 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
 400g dried spaghetti or penne  
 Parmesan cheese, for grating

### To make your meatballs

Pick the rosemary leaves off the woody stalks and finely chop them • Wrap the crackers in a tea towel and smash up until fine, breaking up any big bits up with your hands • Add to the bowl with the mustard, minced meat, chopped rosemary and oregano • Crack in the egg and add a good pinch of salt and pepper • With clean hands scrunch and mix up well • Divide into 4 large balls • With wet hands, divide each ball into 6 and roll into little meatballs – you should end up with 24 • Drizzle them with olive oil and jiggle them about so they all get coated • Put them on a plate, cover and place in the fridge until needed

### To cook your pasta, meatballs and sauce

Pick the basil leaves, keeping any smaller ones to one side for later • Peel and finely chop the onion and the garlic • Finely slice the chilli • Put a large pan of salted water on to boil • Next, heat a large frying pan on a medium heat and add 2 lugs of olive oil • Add your onion to the frying pan and stir for around 7 minutes or until softened and lightly golden • Then add your garlic and chilli, and as soon as they start to get some colour add the large basil leaves • Add the tomatoes and the balsamic vinegar • Bring to the boil and season to taste • Meanwhile, heat another large frying pan and add a lug of olive oil and your meatballs • Stir them around and cook for 8–10 minutes until golden (check they're cooked by opening one up – there should be no sign of pink) • Add the meatballs to the sauce and simmer until the pasta is ready, then remove from the heat • Add the pasta to the boiling water and cook according to the packet instructions

### To serve your meatballs

Saving some of the cooking water, drain the pasta in a colander • Return the pasta to the pan • Spoon half the tomato sauce into the pasta, adding a little splash of your reserved water to loosen • Serve on a large platter, or in separate bowls, with the rest of the sauce and meatballs on top • Sprinkle over the small basil leaves and some grated Parmesan

