

Miniature Meatball Soup

about 6 cups

Shorba Keema (shore-ba kee ma)

As a child, my mother was so happy when she caught a cold because she knew her mother would always prepare this soup for her—a clear tomato broth with miniature meatballs and basmati rice, seasoned to perfection. I love to offer this soup on a cold day for lunch with a fresh loaf of bread right out of the oven. It is delicious as a meal, before a meal, or to cure the common cold!

Prepare ahead: You can prepare the soup several days in advance. Refrigerate until needed. You can also freeze the soup for several weeks in a well-sealed container. Serve as directed.

For the soup

1/3 cup minced and 1 cup diced (1/4 inch) yellow onion, divided
1/2 pound ground beef (80%)
1/4 cup and 2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley, divided
1 1/2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
1/2 teaspoon and 1/2 teaspoon salt, divided
1/4 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/16 teaspoon ground cloves
1/16 teaspoon ground nutmeg
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
6 cups chicken broth
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1/2 cup basmati rice (or long-grain rice)
1 cup peeled and diced tomato (1/2 inch)
2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

To prepare the soup

Press the 1/3 cup minced onion between double-thick layers of paper towels. Once the excess moisture has been removed, combine the onion with the ground beef, 1/4 cup parsley, the vinegar, 1/2 teaspoon salt, the pepper, allspice, cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg. Mix well with your hand, using massage-like strokes to work the onions and parsley into the beef. Divide the mixture into 1-tablespoon portions, then cut each tablespoon in half. Roll each half into a ball and set the meatballs aside, (about 30 meatballs). Preheat the olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the meatballs and gently saute them until evenly browned. Remove the pot off the heat and transfer the meatballs to a dish and set them aside. Reserve the pot. Place the large pot over medium heat and add the 1 cup diced onion and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Saute the onions until tender (if they begin to brown, slightly reduce the heat). Add the broth, tomato paste, and rice, and increase the heat to high. Once the mixture comes to a boil, add the meatballs, reduce the heat to medium-low, and simmer covered for 15 minutes. When the rice is

cooked, add the tomato, lemon juice, and 2 tablespoons parsley. Bring the mixture to a boil and cook for 1 minute, then remove the soup from the heat.

To serve

Serve hot with a loaf of rustic bread.

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