

Venison Meatballs

3 lb ground venison
1 egg, lightly beaten
3 (6 oz) cans tomato paste, divided
2 C finely chopped onion
2 large green bell peppers, divided
1 1/2 t oregano, dried, divided
1 t salt
1 C uncooked oatmeal or fine dry breadcrumbs
1/2 t dried basil
3 (15 oz each) cans tomato sauce
4 garlic cloves, minced
3 T vegetable oil
1 bay leaf

t = teaspoon T = tablespoon C = cup

Meatballs: Mix venison with the egg, 2 T tomato paste, half of the chopped onion, half of the chopped green pepper, 1 t oregano, 1 t salt, and the uncooked oatmeal. Moisten with a little of the tomato sauce if the mixture is dry. Mix well, form into meat balls. In a large non-stick skillet over medium low heat, add the 3 T of vegetable oil. Cook meatballs in batches until browned on all sides; transfer to a baking dish and cover with foil. Bake for about 40 minutes at 350°. Cool then refrigerate until an hour before serving. The meatballs can be made the night before.

Sauce: In a 5- to 6-quart slow cooker, combine remaining tomato sauce and paste, 1/2 t oregano, 1/2 t basil, remaining chopped onion, remaining chopped green peppers, and minced garlic. Cook for 5 to 6 hours on LOW. Check and add a little water if necessary. Add bay leaf and meatballs one hour before serving time. Remove the bay leaf, taste and adjust seasonings, and serve hot over pasta.

Makes about 3 dozen meatballs, or enough for 8 to 10 servings with spaghetti or other pasta.