

Sticky Fingers Cooking®

Spaghetti Un'Meat'balls

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 15 / **Cook Time** 30 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

bake: to cook food with dry heat, as in an oven.

drizzle: to trickle a thin stream of a liquid ingredient, like icing or sauce, over food.

measure: to calculate the specific amount of an ingredient required using a measuring tool (like measuring cups or spoons).

pulse: to process just short of a purée in smooth, rhythmic bursts of power with a blender.

roll: to use a rolling pin to flatten dough; use your hands to form a roll or ball shape; or move a round food, like a grape or a meatball, through another food, like sugar or breadcrumbs, to coat it.

stir: to mix together two or more ingredients with a spoon or spatula, usually in a circle pattern, or figure eight, or in whatever direction you like!

Equipment

- Oven
- Baking sheet
- Medium saucepan
- Liquid measuring cup
- Wooden spoon
- Colander or strainer
- Small mixing bowl
- Can opener
- Measuring spoons

- Dry measuring cups
- Whisk
- Blender or food processor (or bowl + immersion blender)
- Cutting board
- Kid-safe knife
- Large mixing bowl

Ingredients

Spaghetti Un'Meat'balls

- 2/3 C broken (2" to 3" pieces) spaghetti or linguine ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free spaghetti or linguine)******
- 4 C water for boiling
- 1 1/2 tsp salt, divided
- 2 rounded T tomato paste ******(for NIGHTSHADE ALLERGY sub sweet red bell pepper paste or pumpkin purée)******
- 2 T hot water
- 1/2 to 3/4 cup breadcrumbs, or 1 slice bread, torn ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free breadcrumbs or bread)******
- 1 15-oz can white beans, drained and rinsed well ******(for LEGUME ALLERGY sub 1 1/2 C diced mushrooms or firm tofu, if no soy allergy)******
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/8 fresh onion OR 1/2 T onion powder
- 1 small handful fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, optional
- 1/8 to 1/4 C grated pecorino Romano or Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, optional ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free cheese shreds, like Daiya brand)******
- 1/4 C olive oil + more for cooking (in classes)
- big pinches ground black pepper to taste

Food Allergen Substitutions

Spaghetti Un'Meat'balls

Gluten: Substitute gluten-free/nut-free spaghetti or linguine. Substitute gluten-free/nut-free breadcrumbs or bread.

Nightshade: Substitute sweet red bell pepper paste or pumpkin purée for tomato paste.

Legume: For 1 can of white beans, substitute 1 1/2 C diced mushrooms or firm tofu, if no soy allergy is present.

Dairy: Substitute dairy-free/nut-free cheese shreds, like Daiya brand, for grated cheese.

Instructions

Spaghetti Un'Meat'balls

break + boil + drain

Break spaghetti or linguine into 2 to 3-inch-long pieces to make ****2/3** cup of broken pasta. **Then, in a medium saucepan, bring** 4 cups of water** to a rolling boil. Add the broken pasta, salt the water, and cook until al dente (slightly firm to the bite). Drain the pasta and run it under cold water and drain well again. Set aside to cool.

measure + whisk

Preheat the oven to 350 F. In a small mixing bowl, measure and combine **2 rounded tablespoons of tomato paste** and **2 tablespoons of hot water** and whisk to loosen the paste. Add **1/2 cup of breadcrumbs** to the mixture to moisten. Set to the side.

combine + pulse

In a blender or food processor (or bowl for use with an immersion blender), combine **1 can white beans** (rinsed and drained), **1 garlic clove**, and **1/8 onion**. Pulse until chopped, but not smoothly puréed.

add + mix

Transfer the bean mixture to a large mixing bowl and add the cooled pasta. Tear **1 small handful of parsley leaves**, adding them to the bowl along with **2 to 4 tablespoons grated cheese**, **1 drizzle of olive oil**, and big pinches of salt and black pepper to taste. Mix well to combine.

stir + adjust

Stir the tomato paste and breadcrumb mixture into the bean mixture. If the mixture seems too wet, add another **2 to 4 tablespoons of breadcrumbs**. Mix together well.

roll + bake + drizzle

Roll the mixture into 1 1/2-inch to 2-inch balls with clean hands. (It's fine if the pieces of cooked spaghetti stick out of the un'meat'balls, as they'll get crispy and delicious!) Bake the un'meat'balls on a baking sheet for about 15 to 20 minutes, until browned and crispy at the edges. Drizzle the un'meat'balls with **olive oil** and serve warm with the **Fastest Tomato Sauce Ever** alongside for dipping. Say, "Buon appetito!" and

enjoy your meal!

Featured Ingredient: Tomato!

Hi! I'm Tomato!

"I'm a beautiful, juicy red Tomato. Do you pronounce my name: "tuh-may-tow" or "tuh-mah-tow?" Either way you slice it (or say it), we tomatoes are wonderfully adaptable. You'll find us fresh or cooked on sandwiches, in salads, tacos, soups, stews, sauces, and much more."

History & Etymology

The tomatoes we have now descended from the pea-size fruit of wild plants that grew in western South America. Mesoamericans were the first to domesticate the tomato plant sometime before 500 BCE. Hernán Cortés, a Spanish conquistador, may have brought tomatoes back to Europe in the 16th century after conquering the Aztec city, Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City).

Tomatoes cultivated in North American colonies in the early 1700s may have been introduced from the Caribbean. Thomas Jefferson also brought tomato seeds back from France. Before tomatoes were used in cooking, the plants were used ornamentally due to some people's beliefs that they were poisonous. One reason for this error was that tomatoes come from the nightshade family, including the belladonna plant (or deadly nightshade), which has highly toxic leaves and berries. Another reason may be that the pewter plates they used back then adversely reacted to the acid in tomato juice.

China is by far the largest producer of tomatoes in the world. In the United States, California and Florida produce the most tomatoes.

The American and British pronunciations of "tomato" were made famous by an Ira and George Gershwin song from 1937 called "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off." Americans pronounce the word "tuh-may-tow," and the British say "tuh-mah-tow."

The word "tomato" comes from the Spanish, French, or Portuguese "tomate," from the Nahuatl "tomatl."

Anatomy

The tomato is a berry from the tomato plant (*Solanum Lycopersicum*), a perennial vine. It is part of the Solanaceae family, like the potato, pepper, eggplant, and petunia. Since it is a berry, it is a fruit, although mainly used as a vegetable.

A tomato's color is usually red but can also be yellow, orange, green, or purple. Tomatoes can be spherical, oval, or pear-shaped. Their flesh is pulpy with cavities, called locules, that hold the seeds.

There are more than 10,000 tomato varieties. Some are hybrids, and some are heirlooms. An heirloom tomato is a variety that has been grown for generations on a family farm rather than commercially.

Unfortunately, in the past 40 years, many heirloom varieties have been lost, along with the smaller family farms that grew them. However, hundreds of heirloom tomato varieties are still available.

How to Pick, Buy, & Eat

If you are growing your own tomatoes, pick them from the vine while still firm, with a slight give, and before their ripe color (usually red) deepens too much. While holding the fruit, twist it off the stem until it snaps off. The leaf on top of the tomato (the calyx) and part of the stem will come with it. You can also snip it off using garden scissors.

When you choose tomatoes at the store, pick fruit that has smooth, brightly colored skin with no cracks or bruises, is firm but gives with slight pressure, is heavy for its size, and has a pleasant, aromatic smell. Avoid tomatoes with pale or dark spots.

Store tomatoes at room temperature, as their flavor will decrease in a refrigerator's cold temperature. Wait to wash them until you are ready to use them.

If you plan to make a tomato sauce or soup using fresh, raw tomatoes, you will want to peel them first. This can be difficult without some preparation: First, put a pot of water on the stove to boil and fill a large bowl with cold or icy water. Next, after washing the tomatoes, use your knife to cut a shallow 'X' through the skin at the top or bottom of each one. Then use a slotted spoon to place the tomatoes into the boiling water until the skin begins to loosen and peel back at the incision, about 30 to 60 seconds. Finally, immediately dunk them into the ice water. The skin should peel easily now. You can also remove the seeds by cutting the peeled tomatoes in half and scooping the seeds out with a spoon.

Tomatoes are versatile vegetables for cooking. Ripe tomatoes can be prepared fresh, stuffed, baked, boiled, or stewed, and they are the base for many sauces. You can also pickle green, unripe tomatoes, add them to salsa or bread and fry them.

Nutrition

Tomatoes are a moderate source of vitamin C, and cooked tomatoes are high in lycopene, an antioxidant, which may help protect your body's cells from damage, strengthen your immune system, and prevent some diseases.