

# Spanish Meatballs In Picada

The sweet taste of almonds and saffron are what distinguishes these Spanish meatballs. While I'm a great fan of fennel seed laden meatballs in a tomato sauce made thick from the breadcrumbs or flour coating the sautéed meatballs, this Spanish version has a sauce directly thickened with a picada of pounded almonds, bread and garlic. They are delicious and a favourite of mine. The pounding of almonds, fried bread and garlic with a mortar and pestle has some similarities with an Italian pesto, specifically the red pesto of tomato, almonds and pecorino cheese of Sicily. However, it is the inclusion of fried bread or biscuit crumbs in the Spanish version which suggests a sauce that is to be used to thicken cooking liquid and not something in its own right. I've only spent a short time in Spain but I hope one day to explore the regions thoroughly and one thing on my list is to find these meatballs on a menu somewhere, most likely in Catalonia. Maybe mine will be just as good because it is hard to imagine a tastier version. These meatballs are very moreish, pun intended. Using a fifty fifty mix of pork and veal mince is preferred for delicacy of flavour and texture and coupled with a good pinch of saffron does elevate them to a special occasion dish. Eat them hot as a meal or at room temperature as a classy tapa with a glass of manzanilla or dry white wine. Olé!

## Meatballs In Picada

serves 4

- 2 slices white bread, crusts discarded, softened in milk
- 500 g pork and veal mince

- 1 egg
- small onion, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbs finely chopped parsley
- salt and black pepper
- olive oil
- flour for dusting

## **Picada**

- thin slice of white bread, crust removed
- olive oil
- handful of blanched almonds
- 3 cloves garlic
- 200 ml chicken or vegetable stock
- 200 ml white wine
- generous pinch of saffron threads
- zest of a lemon
- salt and black pepper

Prepare the meat balls by first softening the bread in a little milk. Gently fry the onions until just translucent. Add the bread to a large bowl and break it up by mixing it with your hands along with the meat, onion, egg, parsley, salt and pepper. Knead the mix until well combined and roll into small walnut sized balls. Dust each ball with plain flour and fry in a large frypan with olive oil until brown on all sides. Turning each ball with two forks is easier than doing this with a pair of tongs. once golden brown remove the meatballs to bowl and then use the same frypan to lightly fry the slice of bread for the picada.

Prepare the picada in a mortar and pestle or a blender. Pound

the slice of fried bread, blanched almonds and garlic into a thick paste. This is your work-out. Moisten with a little olive oil once it is blended or pounded into a paste.

Using the same frypan used for the meatballs bring the stock and wine to the boil. Add the saffron and lemon zest and season with salt and pepper. Add the picada and stir until well blended and starting to thicken. Lower the heat and add the meatballs. Simmer gently for 15-20 minutes. Serve with warm black turtle beans or a salad and crusty bread. Serve warm as a meal or individually at room temperature as a party snack.