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Stuffed Mushroom" Soup Florentine

24 ounces baby bella/cremini mushrooms (may substitute with white mushrooms)
3 Tablespoons olive oil, divided
1/2 teaspoon salt or to taste
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper or to taste
1/2 to 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
1 clove garlic, minced
2 T. dry Marsala wine
48 ounces low-sodium chicken broth
8 ounces sweet Italian sausage, casing removed, kept very cold
1/4 cup Panko breadcrumbs
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided
1 cup gently packed baby spinach (stems removed)

Wipe mushrooms with damp paper towel to clean. Trim the bottom of the stems; cut in half and thinly slice. Remove 1/2 cup of sliced mushrooms and set aside.

In large pot over medium heat add 2 Tablespoons olive oil, remaining sliced mushrooms, salt and black pepper. Sauté for about 10 minutes until soft and beginning to brown. Add thyme and garlic; sauté for 30 more seconds. Stir in Marsala wine; stir for 30 seconds to deglaze pan. Add broth, bring to boil, reduce heat to simmer, cover and cook for 20-30 minutes.

While the soup is simmering, make sausage meatballs. Finely mince reserved 1/2 cup sliced mushrooms. In medium bowl add sausage, minced mushrooms, breadcrumbs

and 1 Tablespoon Parmesan cheese. Mix together. Roll and gently press together to form about 16 one-inch diameter meatballs. Heat 2 Tablespoons olive oil over medium heat in large non-stick skillet. Brown meatballs on all sides for about 10 minutes or until cooked through.

If spinach has large leaves; cut into smaller size. Add spinach to soup, stir and cook until wilted, 1-2 minutes.

Divide meatballs among soup bowls and pour soup over them. Top each with additional Parmesan cheese to taste. Makes 4-5 servings

Recipe by: Christina Verrelli, 1st Place Winner, 2010 Kennett Square Mushroom Soup Cook Off It was stated that this was “inspired by my good friend Stacy’s yummy Italian style stuffed mushrooms.”
For More Information See: <http://www.epicuricloud.com>
<https://sites.google.com/site/epicuricloudrecipes/-stuffed-mushroom-soup-florentine>

Cook’s Note: I added “to taste” comments for salt, black pepper, and thyme. I used dried thyme but fresh can be substituted. Some of my spinach leaves were larger so I cut them into smaller sizes. We served this with a fresh Italian tomato salad and thin crusty crackers. I love the idea that this soup has a rich flavor and doesn’t use cream.

About the Recipe: This recipe is so simple to make that it makes a perfect quick weekday dinner. The broth is rich with mushroom flavor and blends perfectly with the Italian meatballs that are enriched with some chopped mushrooms. The fresh green spinach and grated Parmesan cheese adds that wonderful Roma touch.