



### **Chickpea “Meatballs” with Gnocchi**

*Favorite supper with tender juicy plant-based proteins*

#### **Chickpea “Meatballs”**

8 ounces fresh wild mushrooms, finely chopped

2 Tablespoons avocado oil

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 (15.5 oz.) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

1 teaspoon (each) Italian seasoning, garlic powder; dried coriander

1 egg

Olive oil spray as needed

#### **Tomato Sauce:**

2 Tablespoons avocado oil

1 cup chopped onion

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 (14.5 oz.) can diced tomatoes with liquid

1 teaspoon Italian seasoning

2 cups fresh spinach, fine chopped

1 cup tomato sauce

1/2 cup red wine or grape juice

Water or vegetable broth as needed

**Serve with:** 1 (16 oz.) package Italian potato gnocchi; cook according to package directions.

1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Fresh cilantro, as desired

### **Prepare Meatballs:**

- Finely chop mushrooms in food processor. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Line a shallow baking pan with foil.
- In a skillet, heat oil until hot; add chopped mushrooms and salt; sauté over medium heat, cooking for about 8 minutes or until water evaporates and mushrooms are dry; toss occasionally. Allow to cool. Place in large bowl.
- Place chickpeas on greased foiled baking pan; roast in preheated oven for 5 minutes. Remove from oven; crush with a potato masher. Stir crushed chickpeas into the mushrooms in bowl.
- Add Italian seasoning, garlic, coriander, and egg. Mix until well blended; form into 8 “meatballs” and place on greased foil baking pan.; lightly spray “meatballs” with oil spray.
- Bake in 375-degree oven for 15 minutes; remove from oven; carefully turn “meatballs” over. Return to oven; bake 5 minutes longer or until internal temperature is 165 degrees F.

### **Meanwhile Prepare Chunky Italian Tomato Sauce**

- In a large skillet, heat oil; add onions; sauté for about 3 minutes to soften; add garlic; cook for about 2 minutes or fragrant.
- Stir in tomatoes with liquid and Italian seasoning; bring to a simmer; cook for 10 minutes; stir in spinach and tomato sauce; cook for 5 minutes; add wine or additional liquid until desired sauce consistency. Bring to a boil to remove any alcohol from dish; reduce to simmer. Add cooked gnocchi to the sauce.
- Pour into oven safe casserole; top with chickpea “meatballs; spoon sauce over “meatballs.” Place shredded cheese in the center of dish if desired’ garnish with cilantro sprig and chopped cilantro leaves. Serves 4

**Cook’s Note:** Make sure to serve this warm since the “meatballs” will soften as they absorb the tomato sauce. Also, if you run out of time, substitute a high-quality tomato sauce.

**Recipe Inspired by:** Canada’s food guide

**About the Recipe:** Surprise! These tender “meatballs” are prepared with chickpeas and mushrooms. They have a crispy crust and soft centers, so perfect for a rich, chunky tomato sauce with potato gnocchi. It’s a great way to add some plant-based proteins.