



Meatball Parmigiana Hero

SERVES 2

What else do I need to say—this is a classic!

Loaf of Italian bread or a baguette

Extra-virgin olive oil for brushing

4 or 5 Polpettine (page 69)

2 cups Marinara Sauce

1 cup melted Cashew Mozzarella

(recipe below)

1 tablespoon Macadamia

Parmigiano (recipe below)

3 to 4 fresh basil leaves, torn into small pieces

1 Cut an 8-¹/₂ inch-

long piece of the bread or baguette, then slice the piece in half lengthwise.

2 Brush some olive oil on the inside of the bread and toast it slightly to get some crunch.

3 Next, place your hot polpettine inside the toasty bread and smother with the marinara sauce and cashew mozzarella. Top with the macadamia parmigiano and basil leaves.

4 Close the sandwich, cut in half (or into 4 pieces), and serve immediately.

TIP: You can cut the meatballs in half to make the hero less bulky if needed.

But I think more is better in this particular situation!

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Macadamia Parmigiano

MAKES 2 CUPS

Parmigiano is another cheese that Italians seem to use on nearly everything. This Macadamia Parmigiano is very simple to make, composed of just macadamia nuts and nutritional yeast (with a little pinch of salt).

1 cup raw, unsalted macadamia nuts

1 cup nutritional yeast

1 teaspoon sea salt

1 Place the macadamia nuts, yeast, and salt in the jar of a high-Speed blender or food processor. Pulse until the mixture has the consistency of a fine crumble. Do not overprocess into a paste or butter.

2 Store in an airtight container.

TIP: Yes, macadamia nuts are expensive, but they do work the best to make vegan parmigiano—and you don't need that many. But you can use cashews, almonds, walnuts, Brazil nuts, and even pumpkin seeds instead.

TIP: Make sure your blender is 100 percent dry before adding the ingredients!

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Polpettine (Meatballs)

SERVES 6 TO 8

Both sides of my family generally cooked meatballs on a weekly basis. We constantly argued about whose tasted better, but we all secretly knew that my dad’s mother had the best recipe.

My grandmother eventually passed her recipe on to my mom. Thereafter, every Sunday morning the whole house smelled like garlic and oil and simmering tomatoes, all so fragrant and mouthwatering. I wish I could turn that smell into a candle.

When I became vegan, I could no longer eat those wonderful meatballs, so I needed to figure out a way to veganize them.

After many failures, I finally came up with a winning combination of lentils and mushrooms. Mushrooms are too watery to stand on their own, so the lentils are necessary to add texture and stiffness— but if you prefer other beans instead of lentils, feel free

In the recipe below I recommend cremini mushrooms, but you can also try portobello or any other type you enjoy.

The final result will feature the garlic, the grated “cheese” (we use nutritional yeast), parsley, and all the flavor profiles my grandmother used, but without meat.

1 cup dry lentils

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus 1/4 cup

1 pound cremini mushrooms, sliced

2 tablespoons minced garlic

1/2 cup finely diced yellow onion

3 1/4 teaspoons sea salt

1/3 cup sunflower seeds

1 cup vital wheat gluten

2 tablespoons nutritional yeast

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon black pepper

3 cups panko

1 cup fresh chopped parsley

1 Rinse the dry lentils in a strainer. Pick through and remove any debris or rocks. Rinse thoroughly under running water.

Transfer the lentils to a small saucepan and add 3 cups of

1 cup chopped fresh parsley

water. Bring to a rapid boil over medium-high heat. Once

boiling, reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Simmer

uncovered for 20 to 30 minutes or until tender. Stir in

1/4 teaspoon of the salt. Set aside and let cool as you prepare the meatballs.

2 Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a small sauté pan. Sauté the mushrooms, 1 tablespoon of the garlic, the onion, and 1 teaspoon of the salt over medium heat for 10 to 12 minutes.

3 Preheat the oven to 350°F. Generously oil a baking sheet.

4 Place the cooked lentils, sunflower seeds, 1 tablespoon of garlic, 1/4 cup of the olive oil, wheat gluten, yeast, paprika, oregano, pepper, and the remaining 2 teaspoons of salt in a food processor and blend until you get a sticky, dough-like consistency.

5 Add 2 cups of the cooked cremini mushroom mixture to the food processor and blend together until smooth.

6 In a large mixing bowl, combine the blended ingredients with the remaining cooked mushrooms, then add the panko and parsley.

7 Using a 1 1/2-ounce scoop (or 2 heaping tablespoons), or with your hands, roll the mixture into tight little balls. Place them on the baking sheet.

8 Bake the meatballs for 20 minutes, flipping them over after 10 minutes.

9 Drown in marinara sauce and serve alongside Baked Ricotta (recipe page 60) or your favorite pasta.

TIP: Don't skimp on garlic, and make sure you have a huge batch of sauce to dunk the meatballs into. They are best when completely soaking in sauce.

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Cashew Mozzarella

MAKES APPROXIMATELY 7 CUPS

Mozzarella is one of the most popular cheeses in America—and in Italy as well. Mozzarella should always be light in flavor and texture. Unfortunately, many of the vegan mozzarella options on the market are too thick, heavy, and not particularly meltable.

So my goal for vegan mozzarella was to make it light with a wonderful texture that can complement any dish.

Mozzarella is excellent just by itself or in a caprese salad.

TIP: You should adjust the amount of tapioca you use depending on which dish you plan to use the mozzarella in. For example, if you plan to use the mozzarella melted or soft, use

about 1/4 cup tapioca. If you plan to make a caprese salad, you will want the cheese to be firmer.

2 cups raw, unsalted cashews

1 quart filtered water

1/4 cup nutritional yeast

2 tablespoons, plus 2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons sea salt

2 teaspoons garlic powder

2 tablespoons refined coconut oil

1/2 cup tapioca starch

1 Soak the cashews in water for a minimum of 4 hours. Drain and rinse well before using.

2 Add the cashews, water, yeast, vinegar, salt, garlic powder, and coconut oil to the jar of a blender or food processor. Blend until smooth.

3 Pour the mixture into a saucepan.

4 Stir in the tapioca. Cook over low heat, stirring until completely combined. Reduce the heat so the cheese is at a low boil and cook for 8 to 10 minutes. The cheese should have a very thick consistency (you should have a hard time stirring it).

5 Remove from the heat and let cool.

6 Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

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About the Recipe: These aren't your average plant balls--they're packed with lentils, mushrooms, and Italian herbs for that umami punch. Chef Tara swaps in these ingredients to mimic the texture and flavor of traditional polpette, serving them in a sub. They are high in protein and fiber with a nod to Nonna's kitchen without compromise. As an added bonus, Chef Tara also included recipes for Macadamia Parmigiano and Cashew Mozzarella that can be used in this recipe.