

Lamb & Rosemary Meatball & Cannellini Bean Hotpot

Ok, New Years Resolution time....1. Eat less carbs (will let you know how that goes), 2. Eat more vegetarian (achievable) 3. Exercise portion control (determined but only when we get home from holidays) 4. Drink less wine (no chance). So the holidays are nearly over and the whole family is feeling a little wider in the girth after ham, turkey, beer, ham, pudding, ham, beer, wine etc but we are also a little over the steak and salad thing. Enter this delicious, simple bowl of New Year cheer. Tender lamb meatballs flavoured with rosemary, thyme and capers swimming in a rich tomato sauce, beefed up by the presence of protein packed cannellini beans. Not a bad start to 2014...no carbs and believe it or not...my pants stayed buttoned up the whole time and the glass of red went down an absolute treat!

Prep time: 20 Minutes
\$ Low Budget

Cooking time: 30 Minutes

Serves 4

Olive oil for frying

500gm of lamb mince

2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped

3 sprigs of rosemary, stems removed & finely chopped

8 thyme sprigs, stems removed and finely chopped

1 tbs of baby capers, roughly chopped

1/2 tsp of dried chilli flakes

1 tbs of tomato paste

2 tbs of grated parmesan

1 egg

1/2 cup of bread crumbs

Sea salt and cracked pepper

For the sauce:

1 clove of garlic, finely chopped

1 sprig of rosemary, stem removed & leaves finely chopped

6 thyme sprigs, leaves removed

1/2 tsp of dried chilli flakes

1/2 cup of dry white wine

700gm Jar of tomato passata

2 x 400gm tins of cannellini beans, 1/2 cup of liquid reserved and then drained and rinsed

1/2 tsp of sugar

Sea salt and cracked pepper

2 tbs of chopped fresh parsley

1/2 cup of grated parmesan to serve

Extra virgin olive oil for drizzling

I served this with a crisp salad of radish, fennel, celery and cucumber with a simple dressing of red wine vinegar & olive oil. It would be equally good with steamed greens and if you want to mop up the sauce some crusty ciabatta would be just the ticket!

In a large bowl combine the lamb mince, rosemary, garlic, chilli, thyme, capers, tomato paste, parmesan, salt and pepper, egg and breadcrumbs. The best way to combine this is with your hands as you get a feel for the mixture. If it is a little too wet and sticky add a few more breadcrumbs until the mixture comes away easily from your hands. Use a spoon to scoop out bite sized meatballs and roll them gently with wet hands.

Heat a large heavy based pan, add a little olive oil and lightly fry the meatballs until golden. You may need to do this in batches. Once golden set aside on paper towel to drain.

In the same pan add the remaining garlic, chilli, rosemary and thyme and lightly fry for approximately 40 seconds. Add the white wine to deglaze the pan, scraping with a wooden spoon to get all those bits of flavour off the bottom. Add the passata, beans, bean liquid and sugar, season with salt and pepper and stir well to combine. Bring to a simmer and pop the meatballs back in the pan. Cook on a low heat for 15-20 minutes or until the meatballs are cooked through.

To serve, divide the meatballs, beans and sauce between four shallow bowls and top with grated parmesan, chopped parsley and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Serve with steamed greens or green salad and crusty bread if you wish.

I have also used Butter Beans in this recipe and they are equally good