

Tuscan Meat Ragù

One of the most surprising things about this hearty meat ragù is its depth of flavour. Here, red onion, rather than yellow or white, is included in the “soffritto” – the trio of aromatics that creates the flavour-packed foundation for this dish. Although this may seem like a subtle distinction, it is one worth noting.

Caramelising this “Holy Trinity” of red onions, carrots, and celery adds a rich, sweet note to the hint of heat from the spicy sausage and the earthy goodness of the porcini mushrooms. The end result is a well-balanced symphony of flavours that does not rely on additional herbs and spices.

Tip: For even more flavor, reconstitute the dried porcini mushrooms in beef broth. Be sure to strain the liquid with a coffee filter or cheesecloth to remove any sediment before adding to the sauce.

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 75 min–90 minutes

Serves: 6-8

Ingredients:

2 T. extra virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{2}$ large red onion, finely chopped

2 carrots, finely chopped

2 stalks celery, finely chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ oz. dried porcini mushrooms, reconstituted according to package directions and chopped

$\frac{1}{3}$ lb. bulk spicy Italian sausage

$\frac{1}{3}$ lb. bulk sweet Italian sausage

1 lb. lean ground beef (80%)

$\frac{1}{2}$ c. dry red wine

1 14.5-oz. can Italian plum tomatoes, undrained

Sea salt and black pepper, to taste

Liquid from reconstituting porcini mushrooms

Directions:

1. Heat olive oil in a 5 or 6-quart Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add red onion, carrots, and celery and cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables are tender and nicely caramelised, approximately 8-10 minutes.
2. Add the chopped porcini mushrooms and sausage and cook until sausage is no longer pink inside, stirring frequently while breaking the sausage into small pieces with a wooden spoon.
3. Add the ground beef and cook until browned. When finished, carefully drain and discard any excess fat from the pot, if necessary.
4. Add the wine and scrape up any brown bits from the bottom of the pan with a spatula or wooden spoon. Once the wine is reduced by half, add the tomatoes and the liquid from reconstituting the mushrooms. Stir to combine and season with salt and black pepper, to taste.
5. Reduce heat to just below medium and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, for another 45-50 minutes. If sauce becomes too dry, add a little water while it cooks.
6. Remove from heat and serve immediately on top of a bed of warm, creamy polenta or spoon on top of a grilled polenta wedges for a tasty appetiser.