

SAUSAGE AND MEATBALLS

1 pound Italian sausage links (hot or sweet, depending on your preference)
1 pound ground beef
About 1/3 cup seasoned panko bread crumbs
1 egg
About 1/4 cup [parm-romano blend](#)
1 Tbs. Italian seasoning

Simmer the sausages in about one inch of water until plump, about halfway done. Then pan fry sausages in a small amount of oil, turning frequently to brown on all sides. Remove from heat and cut into ½-inch slices when cool. Set aside.

Mix remaining ingredients until well blended. Form into golf ball-sized bites, pressing mixture together initially between palms and then rolling between hands to firm up. Sauté the meatballs in a cast iron skillet, turning to brown all sides. Set them aside with the sausages while you work on the sauce.

PASTA SAUCE

1/4 cup olive oil
1 whole medium or half a large yellow onion, diced
1/2 bulb fennel, trimmed and chopped
1 red bell pepper, roasted* (see notes)
5 cloves garlic, minced
28-ounce can of San Marzano whole tomatoes
6-ounce can of tomato paste
1 Tbs. Italian seasoning
1 tsp. garlic pepper
Salt and pepper to taste
A piece of parm rind for simmering*

*NOTES

You can use jarred roasted peppers or do it yourself if you have time. Cut the red pepper into segments along the natural lines. Split it open to remove seeds and membranes and arrange pieces (skin side up) on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Slide it into the oven on broil setting for about 10 minutes, or until the skin is charred all over. Transfer peppers to a bowl and cover it with a lid, a piece of foil or a towel. Let it rest for about 20 minutes, and the steam will loosen the skin for easy peeling.

When we make a large batch of [parm-romano blend](#) at home, we save the rind pieces of Parmigiano-Reggiano for simmering flavor into soups and sauces. You can keep them in the freezer in a zip bag until you need them. If you don't have rinds, substitute up to 1/4 cup parmesan or parm-romano blend.

INSTRUCTIONS

Place a large non-reactive pot over medium heat. Add oil and sauté the fennel and onions until translucent, then add garlic and continue to sauté several more minutes until vegetables are softened. Lower heat and add whole tomatoes, crushing them in your hand as you drop them into the pot (it helps to have a tall pot). Add tomato paste and up to 2 cans of water, as well as seasonings, stirring to mix all ingredients well, and then simmer on low for an hour.

Use an immersion blender to process the sauce until it is as smooth as you like. If the sauce is too thick to puree, add vegetable stock to help thin. Add parm rind (or 1/4 cup parm-romano blend), as well as cooked meatballs and sausage, and continue to simmer until the pasta is ready for plating.