

Stuff a round steak Italian-style for a different, economical dinner

You've braised it Swiss-style, rolled it for birds, cut it into strips, marinated and broiled it. And still you're looking for new and different ways to prepare beef round steak. It's steak you like to serve again and again for it represents an excellent value for your meat dollar. You know you're doing your budget and your family a favor every time you serve it.

Enthusiasm for round steak is sure to remain high when you give it a new dimension by wrapping it around a Florentine filling and flavoring it with the enticing tastes of Italy. The stuffing is a combination of cooked pork sausage, chopped spinach and Parmesan cheese.

Round steak represents a good buy for it carries a lower price per pound than more tender steaks from the loin and rib. However, round steak comes to the table tender and delicious when proper preparation techniques are used, such as pounding and slowly cooking in liquid as called for in this recipe.

Round steak is most economical when purchased on special. Fortunately for the budget-minded, it is a frequently featured sale item. Checking food ads before shopping and planning menus accordingly is one of the most effective ways to stretch your food dollar. If the budget allows and the freezer space is available, it's smart shopping to buy several sale-priced steaks.

ITALIAN ROUND STEAK ROULADE
1 full cut beef round steak, cut 1/4 inch thick (approx. 2 to 2 1/2 lbs.)
1/2 lb. fresh pork sausage

pilot light
Greg Melikov

Meatballs are stars of table

One meatball! I vaguely recall the song, but more vivid is a recipe I came across the last two decades while rolling more than 3,000 meatballs.

One meatball is made from three pounds of ground chuck, combined with olive oil, beaten eggs, bread crumbs, parsley, grated cheese, cooked onion, raisins, salt and pepper, browned on top of the stove and baked covered in a 350° oven about an hour, basted with tomato sauce every 10 minutes.

While I was tempted to try it, I resisted because I like my meatballs considerably smaller than cantaloupes.

I GUESS the Italians have made meatballs famous, but they are American, German, Spanish, Chinese, Swedish and English. Meatballs have a more noble calling than just complementing spaghetti sauce, not that I would dare knock one of my favorite dishes.

I think of meatballs as knights of the round dinner table. They can be served alone as hors d'oeuvres or as part of the main meal. They can go in soups with Chinese cabbage and noodles or with vegetables and vermicelli. They can be browned, cooked in broth and served on rice. They can be simmered in a variety of sauces.

There are guidelines I follow no matter their size.

I refrigerate meatballs at least 30 minutes before cooking so they don't fall apart, even if I use eggs. However, I make an exception when rolling them in flour.

I move them around with a fork while they brown in the skillet, leaving enough room to operate.

I use a slotted spoon when adding or removing them from pots or dishes.

But I need no coaching when it comes time to eat.

THREE-MEAT MEATBALLS

2 lbs. ground beef-pork-veal
1 small onion, chopped
2 eggs, slightly beaten
1/4 cup Italian-style bread crumbs
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 can (8 oz.) tomato sauce
Salt
Black pepper
1 tbsp. olive oil

Combine all ingredients except oil, shape into 20 meatballs 1 1/4 inches in diameter and refrigerate 30 minutes. In large skillet, heat oil and brown half of meatballs on medium high heat, remove and keep warm; brown remaining meatballs. Add all to spaghetti sauce or cook in skillet in 1 cup water on low heat about 45 minutes until desired doneness. Serves 5-6.

SWEET AND SOUR MEATBALLS

1/2 lb. ground beef
1/2 lb. ground pork
6 tsp. soy sauce
1 1/4 tsp. black pepper
2 tsp. all-purpose flour
3 tsp. margarine
3 green peppers, quartered
1 cup chicken broth
4 canned pineapple slices, cut in sixths
1/4 cup pineapple juice
1/4 cup vinegar
2 tsp. cornstarch
1 tsp. sugar

Combine meat with 4 teaspoons soy sauce and black pepper, shape into 30 meatballs and roll in flour. In large skillet, melt margarine, brown meatballs, reduce heat to medium, cover, cook 5 minutes, remove and keep warm. Cut quartered green peppers in thirds, add to skillet with 1/4 cup broth, cover and cook on medium heat 5 minutes. Stir in pineapple juice. In small saucepan, combine remaining broth, pineapple juice, vinegar, cornstarch, sugar and rest of soy sauce, bring to boil, stirring, add to pepper-pineapple mixture and constantly stir until sauce thickens. Return meatballs and heat through. Can serve on rice. Serves 5-6.

1 pkg. (10 oz.) frozen chopped spinach, defrosted and well drained
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
3 tsp. flour
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
2 tsp. cooking fat
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 cup water
1/4 tsp. Italian seasoning
1 can (15 oz.) tomato sauce
2 tbsp. flour

What you can do if the power fails

Michigan's occasional severe storms and high winds can lead to power failures. In the event that your electricity goes off it is important to keep the freezer door closed.

Unopened freezers that are full, well-insulated and have been set sufficiently cold can keep items frozen for one to two days. When the power goes off, if meats are still partially frozen, they should be quickly refrozen. Meats that have completely defrosted are still cold and can be cooked, then frozen.

How can you determine if the meat is no longer good to eat? Check for a general change in the quality. This includes loss of freshness and a color change from the bright red in beef or pink in pork, veal or lamb to a dull gray color. An off-odor will develop, and if the meat has been kept in an unopened package, the surface may become slippery. If there is any question about the safety of the meat, it should be discarded.

Remove bone from round steak. Cook pork sausage in frying pan until pink color disappears; pour off drippings. Add spinach and Parmesan cheese, mixing lightly. Combine 3 tablespoons flour, salt and pepper; dredge round steak and pound to 1/4 inch thickness. Spread pork mixture over surface of meat. Starting at narrow end, roll steak, jelly-roll fashion, and tie securely with string at 1-inch intervals. Brown meat in cooking fat in large frying pan; remove meat and pour off all but 1 tablespoon drippings. Cook onion and garlic in drippings 5 minutes; replace meat back in frying pan. Add water and sprinkle Italian seasoning over meat; cover tightly and cook slowly 1 1/2 hours. Combine tomato sauce with 2 tablespoons flour; stir into cooking liquid and continue cooking, covered, 30 minutes or until meat is tender. Remove meat; remove strings and serve with sauce, 6 servings.

To serve, the steak roll is carved into slices and served along with the sauce on linguini, a favorite Italian pasta. Let the nationality of the beef roulade influence the rest of the menu selections. A tossed green salad with Italian dressing and crusty garlic bread will go deliciously. You may also want to add a green vegetable such as buttered peas or beans to the main course menu.

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