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Mushroom Lentil "Meatballs" Over Smoked Eggplant

Who said meatballs had to be made with meat? The meaty taste and texture of cooked black lentils makes them a perfect meatless substitution for this classic meat dish, and the smoked eggplant is a low-carb alternative to rice or pasta.

The soaked flaxseed meal acts as the egg in this completely vegan dish, but vegetarians and omnivores could substitute a regular egg instead. Paired with an easy tomato-basil garnish, you won't miss the meat in this light and satisfying take on a classic favorite.

Prep time: 45 min. Cook time: 40 min.

Ingredients

1 large eggplant
1/4 cup tahini
1/4 cup olive oil
Juice of half a lemon
Salt to taste
1-1/2 cups cooked and cooled black lentils
5 cloves garlic, sliced
1 shallot, sliced
1/2 cup chopped shiitake mushrooms
1 tbsp Flaxseed meal
2-1/2 tbsp water
1/4 cup chopped parsley
1/4 cup chickpea flour
2 tsp harissa paste
3/4 cup halved cherry tomatoes
1/4 cup chopped basil
2 tbsp olive oil
Salt to taste

Directions

1. On a hot grill or under the broiler, char the eggplant on both sides, heating through until very soft.

2. Let the eggplant cool in a bowl, and reserve any liquid that comes out. Once cool, scoop the flesh out of the eggplant, and combine with tahini, olive oil, and lemon juice in a food processor. Blend until smooth. Season to taste with salt.
3. Mix flaxseed meal and water in a small bowl and let sit for 3 minutes.
4. In a pan, sweat garlic and shallots over medium heat until soft. Add mushrooms and cook until soft. Remove pan from heat and let mixture cool.
5. Combine parsley, chickpea flour, and harissa in the food processor, adding the flax mixture and cooled mushroom mix. Pulse several times until the mixture is finely minced, but not too smooth. The mixture should hold together without being crumbly. If mixture is too wet, add a little chickpea flour to help bind it. Season to taste with salt.
6. Form mixture into balls about 1 inch in diameter and bake at 375 degrees F for about 20 minutes.
7. Combine tomatoes, basil, and oil in a bowl. Season with salt to taste.
8. Serve lentil meatballs on top of the charred eggplant puree and garnish liberally with marinated cherry tomatoes.

Serving size: 1/4 of recipe

Recipe yields 4 servings