

## Italian Wedding Soup

This soup is safe for even for confirmed singles to consume. It is not known to elicit spontaneous proposals. Phew! The name derives from the Italian for “married soup” (*minestra maritata*), but they meant the marriage of meat and vegetables, not the romantic kind of union. It’s wielded by Italian nonne (grandmothers) and zie (aunts) at special occasions, festive dinners, christmas and the like. While it’s not necessarily a love potion, there is something pretty amorous about meatballs.

See Cook’s Note for an easy trick to kick up the flavor of this soup.

### Ingredients

#### meatballs

- 1 pound ground turkey (94-percent lean)
- 3 ounces pancetta, finely chopped
- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan Reggiano
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano
- 1 clove garlic, grated
- 6 tablespoons milk
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

#### soup

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 ribs celery, chopped
- 2 medium carrots, thinly sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 head escarole, trimmed and roughly chopped
- 8 cups homemade chicken broth or good-quality purchased broth

#### to serve

- 3 large eggs
- 3 tablespoons grated Pecorino Romano
- 1/2 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper
- 2 cups cooked pastina, such as acini di pepe (from 2/3 cup uncooked)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leafed parsley, plus more for garnish
- Grated Parmigiano Reggiano or Pecorino Romano, for garnish

## **Directions**

### ***for the meatballs***

In a large bowl, mix all ingredients gently with your hands until well-combined. Break off a small bit of meat and fry it off in a small skillet to taste for seasoning. Adjust the seasoning of the mix in the bowl as desired.

Pinch off walnut-size pieces of meat and roll into balls, about 1¼-inch round. Place meatballs on a tray as you finish.

### ***for the soup***

In a large heavy pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Stir in onion, celery and carrots, sprinkling the vegetables with salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes until vegetables are softened and onion is translucent. Add the escarole and cook and stir until very wilted, about 5 minutes. Pour in the broth and raise the heat to high.

When the broth reaches a simmer, lower the heat to maintain a slow simmer. Gently and carefully drop the meatballs, one by one, into the hot broth. Try to distribute them around the pot but don't stir. When all of the meatballs are in the pot, grab the pot handles and gently shake the pot from side to side a few times. (This will prevent the meatballs from sticking to each other and help to set their shapes without breaking them.) Continue to simmer the soup for 10 minutes, until the meatballs are cooked through, adjusting the heat as needed. Keep warm until serving. (Soup can be made ahead to this point, covered and refrigerated, then reheated before finishing.)

### ***for serving***

In a small bowl, lightly beat the eggs with a fork, then add cheese, parsley, salt and pepper. Return the soup to a simmer over medium heat and drizzle in the egg mixture, stirring lightly with a fork to make "shreds." Spoon 1/4 cup of pasta in each bowl and ladle the soup over it. Garnish with chopped parsley. Serve more grated cheese on the side.

### **Cook's Note**

Save the rind from a hunk of Parmesan cheese and plop it into this soup as it cooks. The rind will soften but not melt, adding a rich umami element. Remove the rind before serving. Rinds can be kept for months frozen and used in soups and sauces.

**total time:** 1 hour

**active prep:** 1 hour

**serves:** 8

**difficulty:** *easy*