Pilotes de Nadal (Christmas meatballs)

Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients

Meatballs

Minced pork — 500 g

Lard — 40 g

Extra virgin olive oil — 10 ml

Dry breadcrumbs — 250 g

Spearmint (hierbabuena) — 5–6 sprigs

Parsley — 5–6 sprigs

Ground cinnamon — 0.5 tsp

Pine nuts — 25 g

Eggs — 2 pcs

Egg white — to taste

Salt — to taste

Steps

1. Heat the 40 g with the 10 ml in a frying pan, add the 500 g and stir until it is well browned. Turn off the heat and leave it to rest for a few minutes.
2. Grate the 250 g on a coarse grater. It has to be bread from two or three days ago, quite dry.
3. Wash and finely chop the 5 sprigs–6 sprigs and the 5 sprigs–6 sprigs. Put them in a large, deep bowl with the bread, the 2 pcs, the 0.5 tsp, the 25 g and the to taste.
4. Add the meat, now lukewarm, with all its fat, and mix until everything is combined.
5. Shape the pelotas by hand, as big as you like: they grow as they cook in the broth. Dip them in the beaten to taste.
6. Lay them on a large dish, without crowding them, and leave them to dry a little if you are going to use them straight away.
7. If you are not going to use them yet, cover them and freeze them. When the time comes, bring them to room temperature before adding them.
8. Add them to the hot broth, the noodle soup or a brothy rice and cook them until done. In a pressure cooker, with the broth already made, about 25 minutes (Directo al Paladar, in its cocido con pelotas); in an ordinary pot, at least two hours inside the cocido (Convega).

Sources

Pilotes de Nadal (Christmas meatballs), traditional recipe (Directo al Paladar): https://www.directoalpaladar.com/recetas-de-carnes-y-aves/pilotes-nadal-pelotas-navidad-receta-tradicional-espanola-comunidades-valenciana-catalana

Christmas paella with pelotas (Valencia Bonita): a recipe for about 20 pelotas: https://www.valenciabonita.es/2024/12/02/paella-con-pelotas-de-navidad/

Vega Baja del Segura recipe book, recipe 5: cocido con pelotas (Convega): https://convega.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Recetario.pdf

Cocido con pelotas, the typical recipe of the Vega Baja (Directo al Paladar): https://www.directoalpaladar.com/recetas-de-legumbres-y-verduras/receta-de-cocido-con-pelotas