

grandmother's Sunday gravy, and a feast I'd be proud to invite family and friends to share.

HEARTY ITALIAN MEAT SAUCE (SUNDAY GRAVY)

SERVES 8 TO 10

NOTE: We prefer meatloaf mix (a combination of ground beef, pork, and veal) for the meatballs in this recipe. Ground beef may be substituted, but the meatballs won't be as flavorful. Six tablespoons of plain yogurt thinned with 2 tablespoons of milk can be substituted for the buttermilk. This recipe makes enough to sauce 1½ pounds of pasta. Our preferred brands of crushed tomatoes are Tuttorosso and Muir Glen. The sauce can be prepared through step 4 and then cooled and refrigerated in the Dutch oven for up to 2 days. To reheat, drizzle ½ cup of water over the sauce (do not stir in) and warm on the lower-middle rack of a preheated 325-degree oven for 1 hour before proceeding with the recipe.

Sauce

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 rack (about 2¼ pounds) baby back ribs, cut into 2-rib sections
- Table salt and ground black pepper
- 1 pound hot Italian sausage links
- 2 medium onions, chopped fine (about 2 cups)
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 4 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 4 teaspoons)
- 2 (28-ounce) cans crushed tomatoes (see note)
- ⅔ cup beef broth
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil leaves

Meatballs

- 2 slices hearty white sandwich bread, crusts removed and bread cut into ½-inch cubes
 - ½ cup buttermilk (see note)
 - ¼ cup chopped fresh parsley leaves
 - 2 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through garlic press (about 2 teaspoons)
 - 1 large egg yolk
 - ½ teaspoon table salt
 - ¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
 - 1 pound meatloaf mix (see note)
 - 2 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto, chopped fine
 - 1 ounce Pecorino Romano cheese, grated (about ½ cup)
 - ½ cup olive oil
- 1½ pounds spaghetti or linguine
- 2 tablespoons table salt
 - Grated Parmesan cheese for serving

1. **FOR THE SAUCE:** Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Heat oil in large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until just smoking. Pat ribs dry with paper towels and

TECHNIQUE | IN THE BLACK



Cooking the tomato paste until nearly blackened concentrates its sweetness and adds complexity to the sauce.

season with salt and pepper. Add half of ribs to pot and brown on both sides, 5 to 7 minutes total. Transfer ribs to large plate and brown remaining ribs. After transferring second batch of ribs to plate, brown sausages on all sides, 5 to 7 minutes total. Transfer sausages to plate with ribs.

2. Reduce heat to medium, add onions and oregano; cook, stirring occasionally, until beginning to brown, about 5 minutes. Add tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly, until very dark, about 3 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add crushed tomatoes and broth, scraping up any browned bits. Return ribs and sausage to pot; bring to simmer, cover, and transfer to oven. Cook until ribs are tender, about 2½ hours.

3. **FOR THE MEATBALLS:** Meanwhile, combine bread cubes, buttermilk, parsley, garlic, egg yolk, salt, and red pepper flakes in medium bowl and mash with fork until no bread chunks remain. Add meatloaf mix, prosciutto, and cheese to bread mixture; mix with hands until thoroughly combined. Divide mixture into 12 pieces; roll into balls, transfer to plate, cover with plastic, and refrigerate until ready to use.

4. When sauce is 30 minutes from being done, heat oil in large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add meatballs and cook until well browned all over, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer meatballs to paper towel-lined plate to drain briefly. Remove sauce from oven and skim fat from top with large spoon. Transfer browned meatballs to sauce and gently submerge. Cover, return pot to oven, and continue cooking until meatballs are just cooked through, about 15 minutes.

5. Meanwhile, bring 6 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add pasta and salt and cook until al dente. Reserve ½ cup cooking water; drain pasta and transfer back to cooking pot.

6. **TO SERVE:** Using tongs, transfer meatballs, ribs, and sausage to serving platter and cut sausages in half. Stir basil into sauce and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Toss pasta with 1 cup sauce and reserved pasta cooking water so that sauce lightly coats pasta. Serve pasta, passing remaining sauce and meat platter separately.