

## BRAISED LAMB MEATBALLS

### INGREDIENTS

*SERVES 6 to 8*

1/2 cup whole milk	3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 1/4 cups day-old sourdough bread crumbs (pea-sized), lightly toasted	2 pounds ground lamb (85% lean)
1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds	1/4 cup finely chopped fresh parsley
1/2 teaspoon coriander seeds	1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/2 teaspoon fennel pollen or toasted ground fennel seeds	1/2 teaspoon piment D'Espelette or New Mexican red chile powder
1 small onion, diced	Sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper
3 tablespoons olive oil	Seasoned crushed canned plum tomatoes, preferably San Marzano

In a bowl, pour the milk over the bread crumbs to soak.

In a small, dry skillet, toast the cumin and coriander seeds (and also fennel seeds, if using instead of pollen) over medium heat until fragrant. Let cool, then grind in a spice grinder or mortar and pestle.

In a large, heavy skillet, saute the onion in 1 tablespoon of the olive oil over medium-low heat, stirring often, until medium brown. Add the garlic (adding the garlic too soon will burn the garlic before the onions are ready). Let cool and reserve.

In a large bowl, combine the ground lamb, soaked bread crumbs, onion-garlic mixture, toasted spices, fennel pollen (if using), parsley, paprika, and piment D'Espellette; season with salt and pepper. Mix thoroughly but gently with your hands (overworking the meatballs will adversely affect the texture and make hard little meatballs).

Refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 475°F.

Line a heavy baking sheet with foil and coat with 1 tablespoon of the oil. Gently form the meat into 1 1/2 inch meatballs and place them on the foil-lined sheet. Brush with the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. Roast until well browned, 14 to 18 minutes. Reduce the temperature to 275°F. Gently transfer the meatballs to a baking dish and add enough crushed tomatoes to cover (it is important to cover the meatballs completely so that they finish cooking in a wet environment).

Bake for 30 minutes.