

## Recipe: Spinach and Almond Cheese Stuffed Meatballs

By Sara Baker

I love food items that are stuffed. Generally, stuffed items (ravioli, cannoli, empanadas, etc.) are not very fat loss friendly. I created the recipe below based off a recipe my mom used to make called 'meat bundles.' They were just 2 huge beef meatballs stuffed with cheese and noodles. ☺ My clean version is below:

Ingredients:

- 5 cloves of garlic, chopped
- ½ medium white or yellow onion, chopped
- 4 cups loose organic spinach
- 1/2-3/4 cup mozzarella almond cheese
- 1 teaspoon sea salt, divided
- Black pepper (as little or as much as you like)
- 1 lb. ground organic lean turkey breast (I used 93% lean)
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- *Optional:*
  - ¼ cup whole wheat panko bread crumbs or ¼ cup oat bran
  - 1 egg

Spray pan with cooking spray. Sauté onion, garlic and ½ teaspoon of salt until soft. Add spinach and cook for 2-3 minutes until spinach is slightly wilted. Remove from pan, place in bowl and let cool. Combine 1/2 salt, pepper, basil, oregano, red pepper flakes in a small bowl. Stir to combine. Place turkey in large bowl, add spices and stir. DO NOT overmix. After spinach mixture is cool, add almond cheese and stir to combine.

Using spoon or hands, take approximately ¼ cup of turkey mixture and flatten in hand or on cutting board. Place small amount of spinach/cheese mixture in middle of turkey and use hands to close edges around mixture to create a meatball. Continue with rest of turkey meat and spinach/cheese mixture.

\*\*\*TIPS: If turkey mixture is crumbly, you can add either an egg or oat bran or both. Since I used 93% lean, this was not an issue but might be an issue with 97% lean. If mixture is sticky, wet your hands before handling. Freezing the meatballs for 10-15 min after stuffing will also help them stay together. You can also make these meatballs as big or little as you would like.

Heat large pan on stovetop and spray generously with cooking spray. Place 5-6 meatballs in pan at a time (be careful not to overcrowd the pan) and cook, turning once and until no longer pink inside.

I had leftover spinach/cheese mixture and just ate it on the side ☺ Serve with low sugar marinara sauce or roasted red pepper sauce.