



Kitchen Cheat Sheet: Slow Cooker Porcupine Meatballs

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Tips and Time Savers

- Don't skip the uncooked rice. It swells up inside the meatballs and gives them their "porcupine" spikes. Cooked rice just makes sad little meat lumps.
- Go easy on the stirring. These are meatballs, not a load of laundry—too much movement and they'll fall apart.
- Lean beef is your friend. Fatty meat turns the sauce greasy, and no one wants to skim their supper. Try for 90/10 ground chuck.
- Worried about mush? Use long-grain white rice. Minute rice will dissolve faster than your willpower at a bake sale.
- Making ahead? Mix and roll the meatballs, then freeze them for up to 3 months. You can put them in the slow cooker without thawing. Future-you will be very impressed with present-you.
- Pre-chopped onions save you time, from tears, and from finding onion skins stuck to your elbow at midnight.
- Make a double batch and freeze half. Future-you will think you're a domestic genius.
- Line the mixing bowl with parchment before mixing, then just lift and toss—clean-up without the scrubbing soundtrack.

Storage

- **Fridge:** Keep leftovers in an airtight container for up to 3 days. They'll taste even better once the sauce has had time to boss the meatballs around.
- **Freezer:** Freeze cooked or uncooked meatballs (with or without sauce) for up to 3 months. Just label the container unless you enjoy mystery dinners.
- **Reheating:** Warm gently on the stove or in the slow cooker. Microwave works too—just cover it unless you like tomato polka-dots on your kitchen walls.

Variations

- Spicy kick: Swap regular V-8 for the spicy version, or toss in a pinch of red pepper flakes if you like your comfort food with attitude.
- Cheesy move: Sprinkle shredded mozzarella or Parmesan on top during the last 15 minutes of cooking. Retro meatballs meet gooey pizza vibes.
- Sneaky veggies: Add finely chopped carrots, zucchini, or bell pepper to the mix. The kids will never know, and you get smug parent points.
- Different meats: Try ground turkey, chicken, or pork—just keep the rice so they still earn their "porcupine" stripes. Or is that quills?

FAQs

Can I use brown rice instead of white?

Technically yes, but it takes longer to cook and can stay chewy. If you're patient, go for it. If not, stick with white rice and save yourself the grief.

Can I cook these on high instead of low?

You can. I think you run the risk of them falling apart or being tough or potentially the rice not getting done. I haven't tried it though.

Do I have to use V-8 juice?

Nope. Tomato juice works fine, though it won't have the same flavor boost. Just don't get fancy with marinara—it changes the whole personality of the dish.

Can I make these ahead of time?

Absolutely. Roll and freeze the meatballs, then drop them into the slow cooker when you're ready. Look at you, planning ahead like a responsible adult.

Why are they called “porcupine” meatballs?

Because the rice pokes out like little spikes when they're cooked. No actual porcupines were harmed, just in case your kids ask.

Nice to have

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