



Kitchen Cheat Sheet: Cranberry Meatballs

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Tips and Time Savers

- Try to look for old-fashioned chili sauce or Heinz chili sauce—it's different from the Asian versions that are commonly sold today.
- If the sauce is too thin, take the lid off the slow cooker and let it heat a little longer.
- On the other hand, if your sauce starts thickening too much as it sits on the warm setting, add a splash of liquid and put the lid back on.
- This is one of my favorite appetizers, but you could turn it into a main dish by serving it over white rice with broccoli or spinach on the side.
- Rather than a platter, keep the meatballs in a bowl or the slow cooker. Serve with toothpicks, plates, and a big spoon. This way, the meatballs will stay warm, and guests can help themselves to more sauce if they'd like
- This is one of my easy recipes that doesn't take much time as it is. Having said that, you can speed up prep more by mixing the sauce ahead of time. Keep it in the fridge for a day or so 'til you're ready for it.

Cranberry sauce jalapeno meatballs taste great...

- on Hawaiian slider buns
- on sub sandwiches with white cheddar cheese
- over rice
- with biscuits
- over a halved, baked sweet potato

Storage

Cranberry sauce meatballs keep great in an airtight container in the refrigerator. Enjoy 'em within three or four days.

Reheat leftover meatballs in the microwave or on the stove until hot again. I like to add a splash of orange juice (or a little water) to loosen the sauce.

Like most frozen meatball recipes, I don't recommend freezing leftovers. The quality of the meat isn't as good when it's frozen and thawed twice.

Variations

- Cranberry sauce gives this holiday appetizer a festive flavor, but many people like to use grape jelly instead to switch things up.
- Y'all know I love a little heat. To adjust the spice level of your cranberry jalapeno meatballs, simply use more or less jalapeno.
- Try using these candied jalapenos instead of fresh!
- If you can't find chili sauce, your favorite type of barbeque sauce will work in a pinch. For a spicy sauce, choose a hotter kind or use a little sriracha.
- Feel free to use any pre-cooked meatballs you like. Homemade or store-bought meatballs, beef or turkey meatballs—anything will do!
- Have some homemade cranberry sauce left over from the holidays? This party appetizer is a great way to use it up.

FAQs

Can I use leftover cranberry sauce in this recipe?

Yep. I like jellied cranberry sauce because it's smooth and ready to go, but I also like using up leftovers. So, go for it!

Can I use my own homemade meatballs?

Sure thing, but the meatballs have to be fully cooked before you put them in the cranberry sauce. If you're making homemade, I recommend shaping them a little smaller than usual.

Is this cranberry meatball recipe gluten-free?

For gluten-free party meatballs, you'll have to make sure that the jellied cranberry sauce is gluten-free. (Many are, but double-check to be sure.) Meatballs also usually have bread crumbs, so be sure to buy or make gluten-free meatballs.

How long can I keep slow cooker cranberry meatballs on the warm setting?

The Crockpot manual warns against keeping food on the warm setting for any longer than four hours.

How do I thaw a bag of frozen meatballs quickly?

If you don't have time to thaw the bag in the fridge overnight, fill up a large container with cool water (or plug up your sink). Submerge the bag of meatballs in the water. This method usually only takes about a half hour.

Are these meatballs very spicy?

No, my cranberry jalapeno meatballs have a good balance between sweet, savory, and just a little spicy. If you're nervous about the heat, use less jalapeno. Of course, you can always add more if you're worried it won't be spicy enough.

Nice to Have

As an Amazon Associate, I earn commission from qualifying purchases.

I keep this Stainless Steel Whisk Set (8", 10", and 12") right by the stove because a good balloon whisk is the secret to silky, lump-free sauces. These wire whisks glide through cranberry glaze, gravy, or anything else you're coaxing into smooth perfection. Sturdy, reliable, and sized for every pot in the kitchen—an absolute must if you like your sauces glossy instead of gritty. [Get it here](#)