



Albóndigas de Atún (Spanish Tuna 'Meatballs')

Albóndigas, meatballs, are a classic part of the Spanish tapas repertoire and are also popular in Mexico where they're served in soup. As a tapa they're usually coated in a thick tomato sauce, I love to add a pinch of smoked paprika (sweet or spicy, depending on who I'm cooking for). Albóndigas likely arrived in Spain with the Moors, so would have originally been made with lamb. Today beef is most common, and I love this tuna version. They're delicious and don't taste fishy at all, in fact I don't think many people would pick that they are eating seafood rather than red meat. They're also a good way to use up tuna offcuts from other dishes, as the food processor breaks up any sinew.

Serves 4–8 as a tapa

INGREDIENTS

- 400g tuna (14oz)
- 1 small red onion, finely chopped
- ¼ cup fine fresh breadcrumbs (about 15g/½oz)
- 1½ tablespoons chopped oregano (6 teaspoons)
- 1 teaspoon salt flakes
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Plain flour, for dusting
- Extra virgin olive oil, for shallow-frying
- Crusty bread, for serving

Smoky Tomato Sauce

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (40ml)
- 1 small red onion, finely chopped
- Salt flakes, to taste
- ½ teaspoon hot smoked pimentón (Spanish paprika)
- 400g (14oz) crushed canned Italian tomatoes (polpa)



METHOD

1. Make Smoky Tomato Sauce: heat oil in a saucepan, add onion and salt, cover and cook, stirring often for 5–10 minutes, until soft. Stir in pimentón and tomato, bring to the boil, reduce heat and simmer for a minute or so then cover and set aside.
2. Place tuna into a food processor and process into a paste.
3. Transfer to a bowl with onion, breadcrumbs, oregano, salt and pepper and use your hands to mix thoroughly.
4. Roll mixture into 16 walnut-sized balls, dust in flour and flatten slightly.
5. Heat oil in a frying pan over medium heat and fry balls for 3–4 minutes each side until golden.
6. Drain on a rack over a plate.
7. Place in a serving bowl and toss with Smoky Tomato Sauce.
8. Garnish with a little oregano if you like and serve with bread for mopping up the sauce.