



Our Italian Table

# Meatballs in Lemon Leaves

These delicious lemon-infused meatballs are known as “*purpetti I limuni*” in Sicilian. They do require a source for lemon leaves but are worth the effort! If you aren't fortunate enough to have access to a lemon tree, ask your local market if they might be able to source. (You could also substitute fresh bay leaves-see note below-although they would impart a somewhat different flavor.) And if at all possible, try to find organic leaves or be sure to wash your leaves well.

There are 2 ways to wrap the meatballs. If you have a lot of lemon leaves; you can sandwich the meatballs between two leaves and flatten slightly. Or wrap one lemon leaf around each meatball and secure with a toothpick.

Makes 14-16 meatballs

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## Ingredients:

- 14-16 lemon leaves, preferably organic
- ½ cup unseasoned breadcrumbs (store-bought or homemade)
- 3 tablespoons whole milk
- 1/3 cup grated Pecorino Romano
- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- Zest of ½ lemon
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 pound ground beef or veal
- Extra-virgin olive oil

**To serve:** Extra lemons wedges

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1. Wash the lemon leaves well.
  - a. If you are wrapping each meatball in one leaf (photo below), place the lemon leaves in a bowl of hot water to soften. Allow to sit while you prepare the meatballs.
  - b. If you are sandwiching each meatball between two leaves (photo above), spread out the leaves on a clean towel or surface to dry.
2. Place the breadcrumbs in a large bowl. Add in the milk and mix together to moisten the breadcrumbs. Add in the Pecorino, eggs, parsley, lemon zest, salt, and pepper. Mix well. Add in the meat and mix again using your hands until incorporated.

3. Divide the mixture to form 14 to 16 oval-shaped meatballs.
  - a. To wrap each meatball in one leaf, drain and dry the lemon leaves. Lay flat, shiny side down. Spread a bit of olive oil on the inside of each leaf. Wrap a lemon leaf around each meatball and secure with a toothpick.
  - b. To sandwich each meatball between two leaves, place one leaf on a flat surface, shiny side down. Top with a meatball and a second leaf on top, shiny side up. Press lightly to flatten the meatball.
4. Preheat a grill or grill pan. Grill the meatballs until cooked through, about 4 minutes per side, turning carefully.
5. Arrange the grilled meatballs on a serving platter and serve with extra lemon wedges.
6. To eat, simply remove lemon leaf, drizzle the meatball with fresh lemon juice and enjoy!

**For easier grilling:** If you are wrapping one leaf around each meatball, you can skewer a few at a time to make them easier to grill. This is how you frequently see them sold in butcher shops in Sicily.

**No lemon leaves?** You could skewer 3 or 4 meatballs per skewer, adding a bay leaf and a slice of lemon between each meatball.



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