

## *Cheesy Bison Quinoa Meatballs with Spaghetti Squash Pasta*

*from Urban Sacred Garden*



This recipe is featured in the May 2012 edition of *Kentucky Monthly* magazine and was the winner of the recipe contest for the category of Local Fare.

Bison is one of my top picks at the local farmers market and there is a broad selection from our amazing local farms. I love local beer cheeses, Weisenberger grains and the amazingly unique and quality products produced by Bourbon Barrel Foods. I'm also lucky enough to live less than a mile from Lotsa Pasta, which satiates my Italian food love with a local option as well. The vast variety of Kentucky Proud products on the market makes everyday cooking an adventure. This recipe combines many of my favorites to create a heavenly taste of the Bluegrass.

These meatballs were a miracle of happenstance. I went to look for my standard oatmeal and realized there was none in the pantry. I was rummaging around for an additional starch filler for my meatballs and stumbled across my Quinoa (pronounced 'keen-wah'). If you're anything like the three guests at my table that night, you're probably thinking, "What's that?" It is SO good. The hearty grain gives these tender, delicate meatballs an amazing texture and wonderful flavor. Yield: About 15 Meatballs and lots of Sauce and Pasta, Serves 6

### **INGREDIENTS**

#### **FOR MEATBALLS**

1 lb. Ground Kentucky Bison  
1 Kentucky Farm Fresh Egg  
1/3 Cup Italian Bread Crumbs  
1/2 Cup Whole Grain Quinoa  
1 Tbsp Bourbon Smoked Paprika  
1/2 Tsp Bourbon Smoked Sea Salt  
1 Tsp Freshly Ground Bourbon Smoked Pepper  
3 Cloves Garlic, chopped  
4 Tbsp River Rat Beer Cheese (Mild)  
2 Tbsp Bourbon Barrel Aged Worcestershire, divided  
4 oz. Kenny's Farmhouse Aged Cheddar Cheese, cut into cubes (about 16 pieces)  
1 Cup Weisenberger Mill Yellow Corn Meal  
2 Tbsp Butter

#### **FOR PAN SAUCE**

3 Tbsp Butter  
3 Tbsp Flour  
2 1/2 Cups Unsalted Beef Stock  
1/2 Cup Kentucky Bourbon Barrel Ale  
1/2 Yellow Onion, Coarsely Chopped  
1/2 Yellow Pepper, Diced  
2 Carrots, Diced  
1 Tbsp Bourbon Barrel Aged Worcestershire  
1/2 Tbsp Bourbon Smoked Paprika  
1 Tsp Bourbon Smoked Sea Salt  
Freshly Ground Bourbon Smoked Pepper

#### **FOR PASTA**

1 Spaghetti Squash, cut in half and de-seeded  
1 Pound Lotsa Pasta Fresh Egg Spaghetti  
4 Tbsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil  
1 Tbsp Red Pepper Flake  
Bourbon Smoked Sea Salt  
Freshly Ground Bourbon Smoked Pepper  
1 Cup Lotsa Pasta Parmesan Grana Padano, shredded

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cut Spaghetti squash in 1/2 long ways and scrape all seeds out with a spoon. Cover a cookie sheet with aluminum foil and place squash halves on the covered pan, face (inside flesh side) down. Bake in the preheated oven for about 45 minutes until squash skin is semi firm when punctured with a fork and insides of squash is steamed to a soft, stringy pulp.

2. While squash is cooking, in a large bowl thoroughly combine Bison, Egg, Bread Crumbs, Quinoa, Paprika, Sea Salt, Pepper, Garlic, Beer Cheese and 1 Tbsp Worcestershire. Take a Cheese cube and mold Bison mixture around the cube and roll into a small meatball. Pour Cornmeal into a small bowl.

3. In an extra large non-stick pan melt 2 tablespoons Butter over medium low heat. Roll each meatball in the cornmeal then place in the hot butter. Shake additional 1 Tbsp Worcestershire over meatballs. Turn meatballs occasionally as they begin to brown and ensure even browning all around. Reduce heat as needed to maintain even browning.

4. While meatballs are cooking melt 3 Tbsp Butter in a small sauce pan over low heat. Add 3 Tbsp Flour, stirring constantly until flour lumps are mostly dissolved. Add 1/2 cup of Beef Stock, bring up the heat, and stir until all flour lumps are dissolved. Add additional 2 Cups of Beef Stock and continue to stir to keep lumps from forming as sauce mixture becomes hot.

5. Pour Bourbon Barrel Ale over meatballs. Dump Onion, Yellow Pepper and Carrots over meatballs. Pour sauce mixture over meatballs. Add 1 Tbsp Worcestershire, Paprika, Sea Salt and Pepper. Stir well. Bring to a low boil then reduce to a low simmering heat and cook for about thirty minutes, stirring occasionally, to allow pan sauce to marinate the meatballs and veggies and cook them through. If a meatball falls apart in the process don't worry it will just thicken and add texture to the sauce.

6. At this point the squash should be close to done, check on it and allow additional time if needed. When done, remove from oven and allow squash to sit and steam while it cools.

7. During the last 15 minutes of meatballs simmering, cook Pasta in boiling, salted water according to instructions on the package (about 3-5 minutes for fresh pasta). Continue to stir and monitor progress of meatballs and sauce, adding Sea Salt and Pepper as needed for flavor. Cook pasta until al dente (slightly firm and chewy). Strain pasta in a colander. Retain about 1-2 Tablespoons of pasta water. Turn off heat on meatballs.

8. Dump pasta back into its original pan and add retained Pasta Water, Olive Oil, Red Pepper Flake, Sea Salt and Smoked Pepper to taste. Pick up cooling Squash with an oven mitt (if still too hot to handle). Take a fork or spoon and scrape out fleshy insides of squash into pasta. Thoroughly scrape out both halves. Combine squash and pasta and add more Olive Oil, Sea Salt, Red Pepper Flake and Smoked Pepper as needed for flavor. Remember you're cooking fresh and may need more salt, it is a necessary flavoring agent and saves food from being bland.

9. Scoop about 2 cups of squash pasta into an individual bowl, deep enough for serving pasta. Top hot pasta with Cheesy Bison Quinoa Meatballs and pan sauce, and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Serve with your favorite salad and hearty, crusty bread. Enjoy!