

## Lemon–Herb Chicken Meatballs with Orzo

Serves 4



### Meatballs

- 450 g ground chicken (
- 60 g non-fat plain Greek yogurt (Oikos)
- 25 g panko breadcrumbs
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 3 g garlic (1 small clove), finely grated
- ½ tsp dried dill (preferred) OR ¼ tsp dried thyme + ¼ tsp dried parsley
- ½ tsp salt + MSG blend (½ tsp / 3 g)
- Black pepper, to taste
- ½ tsp fennel seeds, lightly crushed (optional)

### Orzo & Vegetables

- 200 g dry orzo
- 10 g unsalted butter OR 10 g olive oil
- 150 g cherry tomatoes, halved (optional but recommended for color)
- ONE of the following (not both):
  - 100 g fresh spinach, chopped
  - 80 g frozen spinach, thawed and well squeezed
- 2 anchovy fillets, finely chopped (optional)
- Black pepper, to taste

### Yogurt–Lemon Sauce

- 180 g non-fat plain Greek yogurt (Oikos)
- Juice of ½–1 lemon (to taste)
- ¼ tsp salt + MSG blend (¼ tsp / 1.5 g)
- Black pepper, to taste

### Instructions

#### 1. Make the meatball mix:

In a bowl, combine **60 g yogurt, panko, garlic, lemon zest, dried herbs, ½ tsp salt+MSG, pepper, and fennel** (if using).

#### 2. Add chicken:

Add **ground chicken** and mix gently just until combined (do not overwork).

#### 3. Shape & chill:

Form 16 meatballs (about 35 g each). **Chill 15–30 minutes** to firm up.

#### 4. Cook orzo separately:

Boil in well-salted water until just al dente. Drain and set aside. (This prevents the orzo from overcooking while meatballs finish.)

#### 5. Brown meatballs:

Heat **butter** or **oil** in a wide skillet over **medium heat**. Brown meatballs on 2–3 sides, **5–6 minutes total**.

#### 6. Steam to finish:

Add **120 g water**, cover, and **simmer 6–8 minutes** until cooked through (target 74°C internal). Transfer meatballs to a plate.

#### 7. Vegetables:

In the same skillet, add **anchovy** (if using) and **cherry tomatoes**; cook **2–3 minutes**. Add **spinach** (fresh OR frozen) and stir until heated/wilted.

#### 8. Combine:

Add drained **orzo** to the skillet and toss. Return **meatballs** and warm through 1 minute, adding a splash of water if needed.

#### 9. Sauce:

Stir together **180 g yogurt**, **lemon juice**, **¼ tsp salt+MSG**, and **black pepper** until smooth and lightly tangy.

#### 10. Serve:

Plate orzo + vegetables, top with meatballs, and spoon yogurt sauce over the top.

#### Notes

- Moisture insurance: Yogurt + panko keeps chicken meatballs tender even with non-fat yogurt.
- Herbs (Japan-friendly): Dried dill is closest. If unavailable, use dried thyme + dried parsley (¼ tsp each). Avoid dried basil here.
- Anchovy is optional: For umami without anchovy, add 1 tsp white miso to the pan with the tomatoes (or omit entirely and rely on lemon + pepper).
- Make-ahead: Meatballs can be shaped and refrigerated up to 24 hours before cooking.

#### Suggested side vegetable

- Roasted broccoli/broccolini: 250 g florets + 10 g olive oil + pepper; roast at 200°C until browned, then finish with a squeeze of lemon.

#### Nutrition (Approximate)

##### Per serving:

Kcal: 400 | Protein: 23 g | Fat: 14 g | Sat. Fat: 4 g | Carbs: 44 g | Sugars: 4 g | Fiber: 2 g | Sodium: ~540 mg | Omega-3: 0.10 g

##### Whole dish:

Kcal: 1600 | Protein: 92 g | Fat: 56 g | Sat. Fat: 16 g | Carbs: 176 g | Sugars: 16 g | Fiber: 8 g | Sodium: ~2160 mg | Omega-3: 0.40 g

#### Nutrition notes:

- Sodium is approximate and assumes salt+MSG blend contributes sodium similar to table salt (worst-case).
- If using anchovies, add roughly 100–200 mg sodium per serving (varies by brand and portion).
- If your spinach choice differs (fresh vs frozen), nutrition changes are minor.