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Pittsburgh-Style Sausage Sandwich With Chunky Tomato and Bell Pepper Sauce

Adapted from *Sausage* by Victoria Wise

Makes 6 to 8 servings

Sausage:

- *1³/₄ pounds ground pork*
- *1/4 pound salt pork, fat part only, minced*
- *2 garlic cloves, minced or pressed*
- *1 teaspoon chopped fresh oregano or scant 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano*
- *1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme or scant 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme*
- *2 teaspoons fennel seeds*
- *1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper*
- *1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper*
- *1/2 cup white wine*
- *1 teaspoon kosher salt, or to taste*

Sauce:

- *1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil*
- *2 yellow or white onions, halved lengthwise and cut into 1/2-inch-wide strips*
- *2 garlic cloves, finely chopped*
- *3 green bell peppers, halved lengthwise, seeded, and cut lengthwise into 1/2-inch-wide strips*
- *2 small red or green chiles, finely chopped*
- *1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano, or 1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano*

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- *2 pounds fresh tomatoes, chopped, or 3 cups canned plum tomatoes, chopped, with juices*
 - *¾ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper*
 - *Kosher salt*
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- *Extra-virgin olive oil, for cooking*
 - *6 to 8 Italian or French rolls, or 2 baguettes*
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1. To make the sausage, place all the ingredients except the salt in a large bowl, and knead with your hands until thoroughly blended. Cook a small sample in a skillet and taste; add salt if needed. Cover and refrigerate for several hours, or preferably overnight.
 2. To make the sauce, heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onions, garlic, bell peppers, chiles and oregano, and sauté until the onions and peppers have softened but not browned, about 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and their juices, pepper and salt to taste, and decrease the heat to maintain a brisk simmer; cook, uncovered, until thickened, about 45 minutes.
 3. While the sauce is simmering, form the sausage into 1¼-inch balls. To brown them, add enough olive oil to a large sauté pan to film the bottom and place over medium-high heat. Working in batches to avoid crowding, add the sausage balls and brown, about 10 minutes. As each batch is done, transfer to a plate.
 4. When the sauce is ready, add the browned sausage balls and continue cooking until the sauce is reduced and the sausages are cooked through and tender, about 20 minutes.
 5. To serve, split the rolls lengthwise; if using baguettes, cut each baguette crosswise into thirds or quarters, then split the sections lengthwise. Place the bottom halves of the rolls, cut sides up, on individual plates. Divide the sausage balls evenly among the roll bottoms and spoon plenty of sauce over the top. Close the sandwiches and serve immediately.