

Mouthwatering Meatloaf

Ground beef is considered the classic choice for making meatloaf. Moist, tender, and flavorful meatloaf is made with ground meats that have a higher fat content. A lean meatloaf is typically dry, compressed, tough, and chewy. What's the point of making meatloaf if your family doesn't enjoy eating it? Try using 80/20 ground beef for the perfect balance of flavor and juiciness. Using only one type of meat limits flavor and texture. You could also substitute half of the ground beef with chicken, turkey, pork, or Italian sausage.

The ideal meatloaf holds its shape while staying moist, which is no easy feat. You need the vegetables in the mix for flavor and moisture. Add finely chopped or grated onion, bell pepper, and garlic for a subtle crunch. Other common ingredients include celery and carrots. Keep your total veggie amount somewhere between 1/2 cup and 3/4 cup. Any more than that and the vegetables tend to interfere with the meatloaf holding together after baking.

Eggs act as a binder in meatloaf, helping to hold the ingredients together. This is especially important if you are making a free-form meatloaf or one that you shape by hand. Thanks to the egg, a loaf will stay together in the oven and yield neat slices at the table.

Swap out plain, boring breadcrumbs for panko breadcrumbs, crushed saltines, oatmeal, French fried onions, or dry stuffing mix to fold in. Don't think of breadcrumbs as just a filler ingredient—they actually absorb fat and juices that would otherwise seep out, keeping the meatloaf moist. Mix the starch and liquid before assembling the meatloaf, so the starch has time to soak up some of the liquid.

Cooks get a deliciously rich texture by adding milk to seasoned breadcrumbs and allowing all the liquid to be absorbed. Some recipes call for tomato sauce or broth; it is a matter of taste.

Pumping your meatloaf with some cheese at the center makes for a fun surprise for the family, especially when they see how gooey and melty it is when sliced. The best cheeses for this purpose are Colby, cheddar, Swiss, and Monterey Jack. And if you're making a spicy meatloaf, pepper jack would be ideal for a bit of kick.

Salt and pepper reign as seasonings, but it's easy to add complexity and character by exploring your spice rack. Try adding minced garlic, parsley, and thyme for a

deeply savory taste. Adding wet ingredients such as BBQ sauce, Worcestershire sauce, mustard, or soy sauce also bolsters flavor profiles.

Be gentle and use a light touch when mixing the ingredients for your meatloaf. Gently fold or massage those ingredients in with your fingers (food-safe gloves are recommended here) so everything is incorporated. Also, don't pack the meat mixture into the loaf pan because no one wants to dine on dense, tough meatloaf!

Use a baking sheet to cook meatloaf. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper or foil for easier cleanup. A loaf pan will cause the meatloaf to steam in its own drippings, rather than forming a nice crisp exterior.

Who doesn't love a thick, slightly sweet glaze slathered all over the top of their meatloaf? Spread the glaze on the meatloaf during the last 20-30 minutes of baking.

Don't guess when a meatloaf is done. Insert an instant-read thermometer into the center of the meatloaf periodically throughout the last half of the cooking process. When the meatloaf reaches 155-160°F, remove it from the oven. Next, cover the meatloaf with foil and let it rest for 5-10 minutes before slicing.

Everyone needs a great meatloaf recipe that they can count on. It's the ultimate comfort food that elicits a sense of nostalgia. Follow these tips for the most flavorful, moist, and tender meatloaf you'll ever make.