



MEAT LOAF FIVE WAYS

Sometimes you want comfort food, but you want it with a twist so you don't faint from boredom in the kitchen and at the table. It's easy to blend something familiar with one or two 'wow' ingredients and change everything. Try these simple variations on a basic meatloaf.

Tip: Make sure meat is at room temperature when preparing this. And let the meat loaf rest for 5 to 10 minutes before you cut it into slices. That way it won't fall apart.

1. Basic Meatloaf

Like boiling an egg, everyone should know how to make a simple meatloaf. It's so comforting!

1.5 lbs ground hamburger. 85/15 is a nice blend

1 egg

3 T plain bread crumbs

Salt and pepper

¼ C chopped green pepper

¼ C chopped onion

1 t dried parsley flakes

2 T ketchup

Blend all ingredients, place in loaf pan, cover with 3 strips raw, thin bacon if that's your thing and cook at 375 for about 30 to 45 minutes or until center is at least 180 degrees Fahrenheit. Serve with boiled new potatoes, and your favorite vegetable to qualify for true, familiar, comfort food status.

2. Sweet and Sour Meat Loaf

With only a few changes, you will be off to Asia in no time. Surround your creation with white sticky rice, and sprinkle a few toasted, slivered almonds on top. Hmmm. I've never tried eating meat loaf with chop sticks, but there's a first for everything!

1 lb ground beef

.5 lb ground turkey

1 egg

Soak ¼ C French loaf breadcrumbs in 2 T milk. Let sit for 10 minutes. Add to mixture

½ C small pineapple chunks, or rings chopped into small chunks, drained thoroughly

¼ C small julienned strips of red pepper

Handful of white onion, diced

1 T crushed dried red pepper flakes

1 t sesame oil

½ t coriander powder

Salt and Pepper

1/8 t fish sauce

Sriracha sauce to your liking but no more than about a T.

1 T brown sugar

Blend all ingredients. Put in loaf pan and cook in 375 degree oven for about 30 to 40 minutes. Serve with the following sauce: 1/2 C orange marmalade, 1 T rice wine vinegar, 1 t soy sauce, salt and pepper. Heat and stir, put over the meatloaf and top with green onions. Serve with white rice over lettuce leaves. (Can use pineapple preserves, too.)

3. Spicy Italian Meatloaf

The basis of Italian cuisine is bright, distinct flavors and fresh ingredients. However, if there isn't a tomato somewhere in there, you'll have a hard time convincing a die hard meat loaf eater to try this. So, here goes:

¾ lb ground beef

1 package Jimmy Dean Hot Sausage

½ small white onion, diced small

2 cloves of garlic, chopped

1 t dried oregano

3-4 T bottled marinara sauce

1 egg

3 T Italian breadcrumbs (I like the Progresso brand)

Salt and Pepper

1 t finely chopped fresh basil for garnish

There's a little more prep to this. Heat some olive oil in a small pan and sweat the onions. Then add the garlic and cook for 3 minutes on a med low heat. Then add the oregano and stir for about a minute or two. If you're using the bottled marinara, no need to add it to the onion mixture. If you want a bit more authenticity, add 2 finely diced roma tomatoes to the onion mixture and let cook and reduce for about 7 minutes. Add this all to the meat mixture. Spread in pan and cook at 375 degrees for about 40 minutes or until sides bubble and are slightly brown. Serve over spaghetti noodles (or your favorite pasta,) tossed in a little olive oil, fresh rosemary, and some lemon juice. Top with fresh basil. Delizioso!

4. Mediterranean Meatloaf Medley

This one is a burst of flavor and each ingredient blends so well with the rest. Sink your teeth into something international and you will never go back to plain meat loaf again. This sweet and savory mixture is a classic blend of several cultures. You'll be happy to make it your own.

¼ lb ground beef

¼ lb ground lamb

1 egg

3 T plain bread crumbs

1/2 very small shallot diced

¼ C golden raisins

¼ C grated, raw carrots

¼ C very finely chopped celery

Pinch of garam masala

1/8 T cinnamon

Salt and pepper

A small pinch of fresh mint, minced into small pieces

A little milk to moisten if needed

Serve this over brown rice, and top with a bit of hoisin sauce cut with a bit of rice wine vinegar and some sugar. Great to serve alongside fresh fruit like cantaloupe, mango, oranges and apples.

5. Crowd Pleasing Meatloaf Orbs with Grape Catsup Glaze

(Kids LOVE this!) Make the balls small, about 1.5 inches across and make a smiley face in the potatoes. (Careful! The smaller the ball, the faster it cooks! Can also do in a saucepan.)

Take the basic recipe at the top of this list, but add a T or so of brown sugar, and form into balls. Place in a square pan and don't stack them. Cook for 25 minutes on 375 degrees. Serve over creamy mashed potatoes or tater tots, and then this fun topping. First, combine equal parts grape jelly and tomato catsup in a sauce pan until hot. Place 2 to 3 balls on the top of each mound of mashed potatoes. Ladle the grape glaze over all. Serve with a bit of Italian parsley to garnish if you have grown-ups at the table, too.

Want more tips! Email me NOW at camine@ifeellikecooking.com

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