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Meatloaf 101 with Mrs. Kostyra

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Although many meatloaf recipes use just beef, you can add veal and pork for a more tender, juicier loaf. Use an ample amount of breadcrumbs, too -- not for frugality's sake, but to give the meatloaf its distinctive texture and prevent it from becoming too dense. To supplement your meatloaf, add finely chopped vegetables, which will lighten the texture and provide more flavor; try a combination of garlic, onions, carrots, celery, and parsley. Many recipes also call for ketchup, which lends a sweet and tangy taste to the finished meatloaf, while giving the meat a slightly rosy hue.

INGREDIENTS

Serves 8 to 10.

4 slices white bread, torn into pieces

2 1/2 pounds ground beef

1 medium yellow onion, peeled and cut into eighths

2 cloves garlic

2 stalks celery, cut into 2-inch pieces

2 carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces

1/2 cup flat-leaf parsley leaves

1 large egg

1 cup ketchup

3 teaspoons dry mustard

1 tablespoon coarse salt

2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons brown sugar

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees. Place bread in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the steel blade; pulse until fine crumbs form. Transfer to a medium bowl, and add ground beef.

2. Place onion, garlic, celery, carrots, and parsley in the bowl of a food processor fitted with the steel blade; pulse until fine. Add to meat mixture, using hands to mix well. Add egg, 1/2 cup ketchup, 2 teaspoons dry mustard, salt, and pepper; use hands to combine thoroughly. Place in an 8 1/2-by-4 1/2-by-2 1/2-inch loaf pan.

3. Combine remaining 1/2 cup ketchup, remaining teaspoon dry mustard, and brown sugar in a bowl; stir until smooth.

4. Brush mixture over meatloaf; place in the oven with a baking pan set on the rack below to catch drippings. Cook until a meat thermometer inserted in the center reads 160 degrees, about 90 minutes. If top gets too dark, cover with foil, and continue baking.

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