

GLAZED MEAT LOAF Serves 6 to 8

Both ground sirloin and ground chuck work well here, but avoid ground round—it is gristly and bland.

GLAZE

- 1 cup ketchup
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup packed brown sugar
- 2½ tablespoons cider vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon hot sauce

MEAT LOAF

- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup crushed saltine crackers (about 17 crackers)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole milk
- 1 pound 90 percent lean ground beef (see note)
- 1 pound ground pork
- 2 large eggs plus 1 large yolk
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried thyme
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped fresh parsley
- Salt and pepper

1. MAKE GLAZE Whisk all ingredients in saucepan until sugar dissolves. Reserve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup glaze mixture, then simmer remaining glaze over medium heat until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Cover and keep warm.

2. COOK VEGETABLES Line rimmed baking sheet with foil and coat lightly with cooking spray. Heat oil in nonstick skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Cook onion until golden, about 8 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Transfer to large bowl.

3. PROCESS MEAT Process saltines and milk in food processor until smooth. Add beef and pork and pulse until well combined, about ten 1-second pulses. Transfer meat mixture to bowl with cooled onion mixture. Add eggs and yolk, mustard, Worcestershire, thyme, parsley, 1 teaspoon salt, and $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon pepper to bowl and mix with hands until combined.

4. BROIL Adjust oven racks to upper (about 4 inches away from broiler element) and middle positions and heat broiler. Transfer meat mixture to prepared baking sheet and shape into 9- by 5-inch loaf. Broil on upper rack until well browned, about 5 minutes. Brush 2 tablespoons uncooked glaze over top and sides of loaf and then return to oven and broil until glaze begins to brown, about 2 minutes.

5. BAKE Transfer meat loaf to middle rack and brush with remaining uncooked glaze. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees and bake until meat loaf registers 160 degrees, 40 to 45 minutes. Transfer to carving board, tent with foil, and let rest 20 minutes. Slice and serve, passing cooked glaze at table.

Troubleshooting Meat Loaf

The beauty of meat loaf is that you can just stir together some meat and vegetables, pack the mixture into a pan, and pop it into the oven until suppertime. Right? Wrong. Meat loaf has its challenges, but a bit of know-how can fix them.

PROBLEM: Distractingly Crunchy Vegetables

SOLUTION: Trim Options, Then Sauté

We bypass crunchy vegetables like celery and carrots and stick with assertive onions and garlic. Chop the onions fine and cook them a good 8 minutes over medium heat to ensure that they are soft and sweet.



PROBLEM: Coarse, Hamburger-y Texture

SOLUTION: Break Out the Food Processor

Giving the meat mixture a quick spin in the food processor breaks it down for a smooth, finely textured loaf instead of a shaggy, coarse one.



PROBLEM: Greasy, Pale Loaf

SOLUTION: Bake the Loaf Free-Form

Skip the loaf pan. Baking the loaf on a rimmed baking sheet allows the fat and juices to drain and exposes more surface area for a better crust.



PROBLEM: Watery Glaze

SOLUTION: Glaze from the Get-Go

If the meat loaf is glazed toward the end of cooking, the juices from the loaf cause the glaze to drip off. We broil the meat loaf right away to create a crusty exterior, then use a double-glaze technique for a thick, lacquered finish.

