



THE
MEATLOAF
BAKERY
COOKBOOK

*Comfort food with
a twist*

Cynthia Kallile

Aadamsmedia

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Published by
Adams Media, a division of F+W Media, Inc.
57 Littlefield Street, Avon, MA 02322. U.S.A.
www.adamsmedia.com

ISBN-10: 1-4405-4454-9
ISBN-13: 978-1-4405-4454-5
eISBN-10: 1-4405-4455-7
eISBN-13: 978-1-4405-4455-2

Printed in China

Color origination by Ivy Press Reprographics

1 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the publisher.

This book was conceived, designed, and produced by

Ivy Press

Creative Director Peter Bridgewater

Publisher Susan Kelly

Commissioning Editor Sophie Collins

Editorial Director Tom Kitch

Art Director James Lawrence

Designer Karen Wilks

Editor Jo Richardson

Food Photographer Clive Streeter

Home Economist Teresa Goldfinch

Location Photographer Rob Streeter

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Acknowledgments

THE MEATLOAF BAKERY STORY





I love it when people ask me if I always dreamed of having a meatloaf business. “Of course,” I answer. Who wouldn’t? After all, isn’t meatloaf one of the classic All-American dishes? It’s the perfect comfort food and often brings back memories of Mom’s cooking

For me, those memories are very special. As a child helping my mother in the kitchen, I had no idea that one day I’d be showcasing her absolutely delicious meatloaf in my very own store. Yet somewhere deep inside I must have known I’d be celebrating her lovely relationship with cooking and delighting others through food in my own way.

Although I worked in corporate public relations for 25 years, food was never far from my mind. Taking whatever I had on hand either from the farmer’s market or the grocery store, I would prepare something in the evening while watching TV or listening to Barbra Streisand. I loved coming up with new recipes, feverishly scribbling them into my journal if they were good.

But changing careers in midlife—what was I thinking? Why meatloaf? For me, preparing meatloaf was a way to be creative and take risks in the kitchen—to test my ability to put ingredients together in an irresistible way, and to create something that would not only bring back memories of home, but also create new memories for everyone who tasted it.

For three years, I planned, cooked, and experimented with the help of many dear friends

relatives, and meatloaf fans. From endless varieties of meats, vegetables, sauces, condiments, and grains, new twists on classic recipes were born. But the recipes weren't quite perfect; something was still missing. Why can't meatloaf be pretty? It can, and the icing on the cake turned out to be meatloaf's favorite sidekick, mashed potatoes. Now meatloaf would not only be delicious, but beautiful, too. I set out to create works of art in many appetizing pastry shapes and forms, such as cupcakes, cakes, pies, and even bite-sized appetizers, each topped with a special blend of potatoes, pasta, or veggies.

The Mother Loaf, in honor of my mom, was the heart of all good things to come. The Meatloaf Bakery opened in December 2008, and since then it has grown to be a Chicago favorite for natives and tourists alike. As home of the original meatloaf cupcake, we continue to delight customers in our store and from our food truck, Meatloaf-A-Go-Go.

Now, with this book, we bring the best of what we do to you—recipes for memorable meals, reminders of good food we grew up with, and inspiration to be creative in your own kitchen.





INGREDIENTS MAKE THE LOAF

You can't create a meatloaf, or a meatless loaf for that matter, without key ingredients, namely meats, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, veggies, herbs, and spices—plus, of course, those always-important bread or cracker crumbs.

MEATS

Whether you buy them ground or choose to grind them yourself, fresh quality meats are essential when creating any one of my meatloaf recipes. Although I recommend the traditional combination of beef, pork, and veal for a classic-style meatloaf, you may select any blend of these three primary meats.

Ground chuck is my meat of choice in the beef category. It is 80 to 85% lean, so it's ideal for the perfect meatloaf, with just enough fat to enhance the flavor and prevent dryness. Ground veal is helpful for adding smoothness to the mix.

Ground pork is simply that—all pork and nothing else. Typically, Italian sausage or chorizo is made from pork with extra seasonings, however turkey and chicken varieties are available, too, and you can find these in specialty markets.

Lamb, also ground, is a delicious addition to the world of meatloaf recipes, but it needs to be tender and fresh, so check with your butcher if you're uncertain about making the right choice.



POULTRY AND SEAFOOD

Ground turkey and chicken are readily available in most grocery stores. I prefer a combination of both light and dark meat for enhanced flavor and moisture. If you'd like to reduce your calories and fat a bit, you may choose all white meat, although dark meat is claimed to contain more nutrients and vitamins—so why not go for a blend?

Salmon is best fresh, but frozen can be used—just be sure to thaw it out in the refrigerator before preparing. I opt for wild-caught Alaskan, but any variety will work, depending upon your preference and budget. You may also choose canned white or light tuna packed in water.



THE FILLER

I generally use bread crumbs, crushed butter crackers, or the occasional oyster cracker for this purpose. The bread crumbs are mostly the dry, unseasoned white variety, unless otherwise specified in the recipe ingredients list. Store-bought work just fine, but if you prefer to make your own it's simple: just crumble dry (not stale) bread into fine crumbs, either by hand or using a food processor. If you have only fresh bread, you can easily dry it by placing crust-free slices on an ungreased cookie sheet and baking at 300°F/150°C, turning once, for approximately 10 to 15 minutes until they are dry. Panko bread crumbs (found in most specialty or Asian markets) also add texture and a lighter touch to many recipes. Last, but certainly not least, are the tried and true rolled oats—I choose 100% whole grain, but in any event make sure you avoid the instant variety.



EGGS AND DAIRY

Eggs hold ingredients together, and dairy products create moisture to make delicious juicy meatloaf. Use large eggs, not medium or jumbo. All my recipes recommend 2% milk, but if you prefer you may use whole milk for a richer outcome or nonfat milk for an even healthier alternative. Some recipes include sour cream, plain yogurt, whipping cream, or buttermilk, but there's no need to skimp on these unless you must for dietary or health purposes. When a recipe calls for butter, use unsalted unless otherwise specified. If you do use salted butter, slightly reduce the salt amounts in the recipe.

FRESH VEGETABLES, FRUITS, AND HERBS

Just about every recipe in this book calls for some type of fresh vegetable, herb, or fruit juice. All are easily found at a grocery store, specialty market, or perhaps in your garden. Whether it's red bell peppers, lemons, celery, carrots, or onions, be sure to wash or peel them well (as appropriate) before slicing, dicing, or juicing. Most of these ingredients can be prepared ahead of time, covered with plastic wrap, and refrigerated.

Fresh herbs are my preference, but several of my recipes call for dried herbs; I believe there's a place for both in every kitchen. If you love the smell of fresh basil, rosemary, thyme, or mint, pick up small herb plants and enjoy them year-round, either in flowerpots placed on a sunny kitchen windowsill or outdoors, depending on season or climate.

To Be or Not to Be a Cupcake

Each of the meatloaf recipes in this cookbook has been created in a unique bakery-inspired form. From cupcakes, loaves, and cakes to pies and even logs, most are interchangeable, so feel free to experiment with the various shapes and recipes. When it's time to choose a

garnish, topping, or accompaniment for the final dish, that, too, can be up to you, but ideal combinations are suggested.



TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES MAKE THE LOAF

To me, the beauty of meatloaf and all its variations is that, generally speaking, it's very forgiving. If you don't have time to lightly beat the eggs, don't worry. If you add a little too much ketchup, no one will notice because, after all, just about everyone loves ketchup. Yet there are a few handy tools, steps, and tips that will make your kitchen experience even more fulfilling.

Useful Equipment

The following items aren't essential, but you may find them helpful in preparing some of the recipes:

- food processor
- immersion blender
- ice-cream scoop
- lemon juicer
- mortar and pestle
- salad spinner
- wire whisk
- instant-read thermometer

READY, PREP, GO!

Hand chopping can be oh-so therapeutic, so give it a whirl if time permits. Just be sure to use a sharp knife with a wide blade, such as a chef's knife. Alternatively, try a mezzaluna—this amazing single- or double-blade knife is curved like a halfmoon and perfect for hand chopping.



Pots and Pans for Baking

The specific baking pans you need will, of course, depend on which recipes you choose to make. The following list covers every form of meatloaf the recipes take: loaf, cupcake, pie, layer cake, sheet cake, and potpie:

- two nonstick 10-inch × 5-inch/25-cm × 13-cm loaf pans
- large (not jumbo) and regular nonstick 6-cup cupcake/muffin pan
- nonstick 9-inch/23-cm or 10-inch/25-cm pie pan
- two nonstick 8-inch/20-cm round cake pans
- eight large (9–10-oz./250–280-g) ramekins

- 13-inch × 9-inch × 2-inch/5-cm × 23-cm × 5-cm baking pan
- 12-inch × 9-inch/30-cm × 23-cm baking dish
- 9-inch × 7-inch/23-cm × 18-cm baking dish
- 8-inch × 8-inch/20-cm × 20-cm baking pan
- nonstick cookie sheet or sheet pan
- assorted sauté pans, saucepans, and stock pots

Parsley

Do take care with curly parsley, because it can be rather dirty. I recommend, and my mother insists, that it be picked from the stems first so you have only the curly flowerlike ends. Place the parsley in a salad spinner filled with cold water. Soak and rinse it two or three times to be sure the water is clean—sometimes adding a shake of salt to the water can help separate the dirt from the parsley. Use the salad spinner to spin out the water. Lay the fresh-picked parsley on paper towels and pat lightly with paper towels to dry thoroughly—the drier the better. If you're up for chopping, grab your favorite chef's knife and a cutting board and chop away. If you're not up for it, then use a food processor.

Thyme

Fresh thyme is a delightful herb and I use it often in my recipes. I know it takes “thyme,” but be sure to remove the tiny green leaves from the woody stems. Then you'll just need to chop it quickly and add to the mixture.

Basil

Fresh basil is one of the easier herbs to prepare. Give it a quick rinse if need be and pat it dry with paper towels. Pick the leaves from the stems and briskly chop by hand. For recipes requiring a lot of chopped basil, you can use a food processor.

Garlic

Fresh garlic is a staple in my kitchen. Easily purchased as bulbs or in containers of individual peeled cloves, garlic adds so much to so many recipes. Remove the ends from each clove before chopping. Now here's a tip for smashing garlic learned in one Toledo, Ohio, kitchen circa 1964. Grab a small bowl and place a little salt in the bottom of it (salt acts as an abrasive and helps draw out the juices). Add the garlic clove(s) and, using the end of a wooden knife handle or pestle, smash the garlic to a fine paste.

Lemons

For a fast spritz of lemon juice, holding half a lemon in one hand, use your other hand to insert a table fork into the lemon's flesh and squeeze the lemon around it to release the juice. It's as good as a stress ball, and much tastier. Remember to remove the seeds with a mesh strainer.



Meatloaf Memos

- Read the recipe thoroughly.
- Preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C.

- Prepare all your ingredients and set them up for easy access.
- Prepare your pans by greasing them with canola or vegetable oil spray.
- Make sure your instant-read thermometer is calibrated correctly.
- Be sure to wash your cutting boards after each use to avoid cross-contamination.
- Turn on your favorite music and enjoy the process!

MASTERING THE MIX

My favorite part in preparing meatloaf is mixing. It's the culmination of prepping all those ingredients, bringing everything together—the colors, aromas, and flavors. I recommend mixing everything by hand, although you may use a mixer or food processor, but be careful to avoid overmixing—you need to only thoroughly blend the ingredients, and too much mixing can make your meatloaf tough or possibly dry.

After blending your meatloaf mixture, place it in the prepared loaf, cupcake, pie, or cake pan. Shape the mixture as directed in the recipe and smooth the top with your hands or a cake spatula. Be sure to distribute the mixture evenly and give the pan a gentle tap or two on the counter to settle it.

If you've made more than one batch of the recipe and would like to bake it at a later time, wrap the raw mixture in foil or plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator, or freeze it if you plan to keep it longer than a day. When you're ready to bake it, simply follow the recipe baking instructions. If your raw meatloaf mixture has been in the freezer, either first thaw it in the refrigerator and then bake it once it's thoroughly thawed, or place it directly in the oven without thawing and add 20 to 30 extra minutes of baking time.





FROM OVEN TO TABLE

This phase of the meatloaf journey is easy, especially if you follow a few simple guidelines.

Be sure your oven reaches the desired temperature before you use it. While the cooking times in each recipe are good estimates, I recommend using an instant-read thermometer to ensure the item is cooked properly but not overcooked—160°F/71°C for meat, seafood, and vegetarian mixtures, or 165°F/74°C for poultry. About halfway through the cooking time, turn the pan around.

After removing the meatloaf from the oven, carefully drain off any liquid that may have accumulated in the pan. Once cool enough to handle (about 7 to 10 minutes), run a knife or cake spatula around the edge of the pan to release the meatloaf. An unmolding technique that works well for me is to lay a small cutting board over the meatloaf pan and, while holding the board and pan together, flip the board and pan over so the meatloaf comes out onto the cutting board. From here you can garnish or top the meatloaf with potatoes, vegetables, or whatever the recipe calls for.

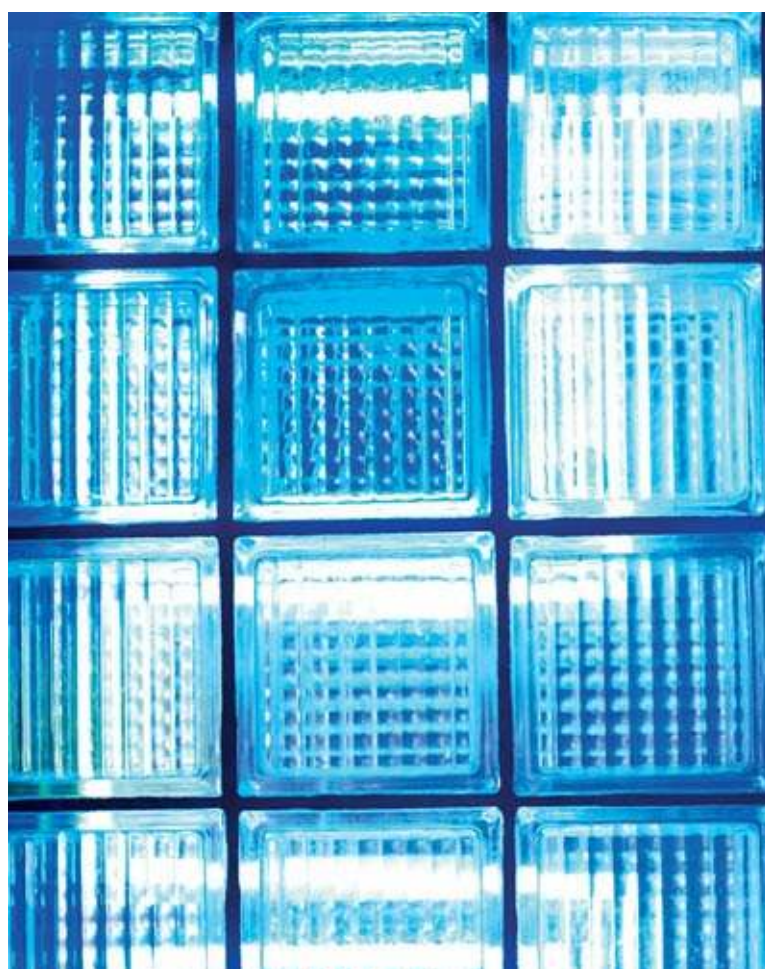
Just about all my recipes can be made ahead of time, refrigerated, and reheated. In fact, I recommend this method in particular if assembling a two-layer meatloaf cake, as follows:

1. Bake the two single meatloaf layers.
2. Unmold and refrigerate.
3. Follow the directions for the “cake filling and frosting.”
4. Assemble and refrigerate until ready to heat and serve.
5. Place in the oven for approximately 45 minutes, or until the internal temperature reaches 165°F/74°C. Cover with aluminum foil, if necessary, to prevent overbrowning.



FROM FREEZER TO OVEN

Completely cooked meatloaf also freezes very well. After your meatloaf is thoroughly cooled, wrap and label it clearly, and then place in the freezer—it will be ready when you are. There's no need to first thaw it, but if you prefer, do so in the refrigerator. Otherwise simply slip it into an oven preheated to 375°F/190°C, cover with aluminum foil, and bake for 20 to 30 minutes, then remove the foil and cook for another 20 to 30 minutes, or until the internal temperature reaches 165°F/74°C.



Potato “Frosting” Supplies

- 12–14-inch/30–35-cm pastry bags (disposable, reusable, or silicone)
- stainless-steel star pastry tips or any tip wide enough for prepared mashed potatoes to pass

- through (you can purchase cake-decorating kits that include an assortment of bags and tips)
- pot holder/towel in case the potatoes are too hot to handle in the pastry bag
- ice-cream scoop for scooping
- cake spatula for spreading

THE POTATO DE RESISTANCE

So why can't meatloaf be pretty? I think it can, and that's the magic of these recipes. By pairing scrumptious meatloaf with creative toppings and garnishes, such as potatoes, cheesy crumbles, pasta, and colorful bell peppers, tasty yet otherwise unexciting meatloaf is transformed into a work of art. So have fun and be creative with your finishing touches.

Piping potatoes can be somewhat challenging, but if you carefully follow these few steps, it should turn out picture perfect. Star pastry tips are easy to use, and you can also view videos demonstrating piping techniques online.

1. Insert your chosen pastry tip into the pastry bag.
2. Fill the bag halfway with the prepared potatoes.
3. Hold the bag upright and squeeze gently but firmly to release the potatoes. Use caution, because the bag may be hot to the touch; if too hot to handle, hold with a pot holder or a towel.

Scooping potatoes (or prepared rice) is a simple and fun alternative. Any ice-cream scoop will work. And when you're in a hurry, just place the potatoes or any topping on your meatloaf with a cake spatula or your hands. Only watch out for those hot potatoes!



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