

Jeff's Meatloaf

INGREDIENTS:

1 tbsp. good olive oil
3-4 slices bacon, chopped
3 cups chopped yellow onions (3 onions)
1-2 tbsp. minced garlic (depending on taste)
1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme leaves
2 tsp. kosher salt
1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
3-4 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
1/3 cup canned chicken stock
1 tbsp. tomato paste
2 ½ lbs. ground chuck (80-90 percent lean)*
½ cup plain dry bread crumbs (recommended: fresh or Progresso)
2 extra-large eggs, beaten
½ cup ketchup
5-6 slices bacon to top meatloaf (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 325°F. Heat the olive oil in a medium sauté pan with the bacon. Add the onions, garlic, thyme, salt, and pepper and cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, for 8 to 10 minutes, until the onions are translucent but not brown. Off the heat, add the Worcestershire sauce, chicken stock, and tomato paste. Allow to cool slightly.

In a large bowl, combine the ground chuck*, onion mixture, bread crumbs, and eggs, and mix lightly with a fork. Don't mash or the meat loaf will be dense. Shape the mixture into a rectangular loaf on a sheet pan covered with parchment paper, or place in large loaf pan/dish. Lay bacon slices over the top of the meatloaf.

Bake for 45-50 minutes and remove from oven. Spread the ketchup evenly on top and return to oven to continue cooking for the remaining 10-25 minutes. The internal temperature should be 160 degrees F and the meat loaf is cooked through. (A pan of hot water in the oven, under the meat loaf, will keep the top from cracking.) Serve hot.

Notes: When choosing meat, you may want to mix up the meat and choose to add ground pork and/or ground veal, or even ground sausage along with the ground chuck. This is up to you. If so, I would add ½-¾ lb. of each. It adds a bit more depth of flavor but the ground chuck by itself is delicious. The final total weight of the meat mixture should be around 2½-3 lbs.