

SAVORY MEATLOAF

4 to 6 servings

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| 3 slices white or wheat bread | 1/2 teaspoon salt |
| 1 pound ground beef | 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper |
| 1 egg, beaten | 1 teaspoon ground sage |
| 1 cup ketchup, divided | Brown sugar, for sprinkling atop (optional) |
| 1/3 cup milk | |

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Cut or break the bread into pieces and pulse in a blender or food processor to make crumbs (1½ cups).
3. In a large bowl combine the meat, egg, and bread crumbs. Add 1/2 cup of the ketchup, the milk, salt, pepper, and sage. Mix well with a fork.
4. Place the meat mixture in a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan (see Note) and shape it with a fork. Spread the remaining 1/2 cup of ketchup over the top. Sprinkle with brown sugar, if desired. Bake uncovered for 1 hour.

Serve with a vegetable and your choice of a side dish: **Cheesy Scalloped Potatoes** (p. 43), baked potatoes, **Classic Mashed Potatoes** (p. 211), rice or **Rice Pilaf** (p. 213), or noodles.

Variations:

- ◆ Substitute 3/4 cup toasted wheat germ for the bread crumbs.
- ◆ Use half ground beef and half ground pork.
- ◆ Mix in 3/4 cup partially cooked diced carrots.
- ◆ In place of the ketchup topping, mix 3 tablespoons honey with 1/4 cup prepared mustard. Spread half of the mixture over the meatloaf before baking. Heat the other half in the microwave just before serving and pass as a sauce with the baked meatloaf.
- ◆ Bake the loaf in a shallow baking pan. Spread mashed potatoes over the top and sides. Sprinkle with grated Cheddar cheese and return it to the oven until the cheese melts. Cut into slices and serve immediately.
- ◆ Bake the loaf in a 9 x 13-inch pan, and after 40 minutes of baking, pour one 8-ounce can of tomato sauce and one 8-ounce can of peas, undrained, around the meatloaf. Return the pan to the oven to continue baking. This makes a yummy sauce that can be spooned over mashed potatoes. My former neighbor Alice shared this idea with me, and it became a favorite of Steve's.

Note: As an alternative to the loaf pan, form the meat mixture into a loaf and place it in a shallow baking pan. Meatloaf baked this way will have a crustier outside.

MONDAY COMFORT FOOD

Of course I learned to make meatloaf from my mom. She makes great meatloaf, but my kids didn't like the onions in her recipe, so I took them out and changed things just a bit. I like this even better! (If you like onions, simply add 1/4 cup diced to the meat mixture.) The ketchup and brown sugar topping makes it especially good, and the variations are excellent as well. The leftovers make great meatloaf sandwiches for the next day!

CAN DO AHEAD

This dish may be put together ahead of time. Refrigerate until baked.