

**Ingredients:**

1 cup bread crumbs
¼ cup whole milk
1 pound ground beef
1 pound ground pork
1 cup minced onions
½ cup minced green peppers
1 tablespoon chopped garlic
3 eggs
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 can crushed tomatoes

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In a mixing bowl, add beef, pork, onions, peppers, garlic, eggs, milk, and bread crumbs. Blend thoroughly. Season the mixture with salt and pepper.

Lightly oil a cookie sheet. Transfer the meat mixture to the center of the cookie sheet and form into a log about 9 inches long and 4 inches wide. Coat the top of the meatloaf with ½ cup of the crushed tomatoes.

Bake for 1 to 1 ½ hours. Baste regularly and rotate occasionally to insure the meatloaf cooks evenly. When it is firm remove it from the oven allow it to cool a bit before slicing.

**UBER AMERICAN
GARLIC MASHED POTATOES**

1 medium head of garlic
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 pounds potatoes, peeled and sliced for quick cooking
4 tablespoons sweet cream unsalted butter, softened
½ cup whole milk or whipping cream
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Drizzle garlic head with olive oil, and wrap in aluminum foil. Bake in preheated oven for 1 hour. While baking, bring a large pan of salted water to a boil. Add your sliced potatoes, and cook until tender, around 10-15 minutes. Drain then smash. Stir in butter, milk, salt and pepper.

Remove the garlic from the oven, and cut in half. Squeeze the softened cloves into the potatoes and mash again until you have the consistency you prefer. ●

~LISA HENSHAL

CONFESSION and MEATLOAF are good for the soul

"I don't use a pan. I just form it and put it on a cookie sheet." (I think I may have found my Achilles heel!)

"The train at the Atlanta airport smells like old meatloaf." (Well, not all were uplifting.)

"To test, fry a small 'hamburger' patty of the meatloaf until cooked; the patty should hold together but still have a soft consistency. Taste the patty for seasoning."

"Oh gosh, meatloaf makes me gag. The singer and the food actually." (Well, if you can't appreciate "Paradise by the Dashboard Light," how can we expect you to like good American food?)

"Add some sour cream and worcestershire sauce. It's delish."

"The best meatloaf I ever made was with Silver Palate Thick and Rough oatmeal instead of bread crumbs. I can't find it at the stores here, though. www.worldpantry.com should have it."

"I always make garlic mashed potatoes to go with, and I feel uber American when I eat it." (This last comment from a native Parisian surfing the American-based food forum.)

Many recipes were sent to me and I tried almost all of them. I skipped any with tofu or ground turkey, and gravitated toward the more simplistic. The recipe here is the winner, hands down.

I highly recommend a trip into cyberspace the next time a recipe or cooking technique eludes you. You might just find the answer half a world away – and make a handful of new "cooking buddies."

I have a confession. It's not a pretty one, really. I pride myself on my cozy kitchen, my elaborate holiday meals, a good variety for weeknight dinners and my willingness to try new things such as Thai or Moroccan foods at home. So you'll understand why it's so painful to admit ...

I can't make a meatloaf.

Usually I can throw together pastas, sauces and other foods without a recipe and they turn out great. However, I tried for years to make a decent meatloaf and just couldn't do it. I follow the directions to the letter. I've used different pans, different ground beef lean points, different recipes, and two different ovens; they all turn out the same. They fall into two categories: "red and squishy" (under-cooked after three hours of baking) or "toxic goo." My family, bless them, refuses to even try them when that happens.

Being enormously pregnant, last weekend I was craving a meatloaf. So I found what appeared to be a very simple recipe in our church cookbook. I put it together and baked it for the specified one hour. It came out looking like I forgot to turn the oven on! I put it back in for 30 minutes. After 15 minutes I put some biscuits in the oven. The biscuits came out perfect (so the oven does work), but the meatloaf was still completely raw in the middle (and on top for that matter).

Now I was on a mission. I was determined to find the missing link in my meatloaf production. I went out to the Internet, found several forums that looked "mom-friendly" and focused on food topics, then I poured my heart out.

The confession felt good and the answers I received were as uplifting to my soul as a good church sermon.