

dried cranberries, which we felt were too strange; we were looking for an all-American meatloaf. We began our testing with the ground turkey itself. There were three kinds of ground turkey meat to choose from (see page 211 for more information): ground dark meat, ground white meat, and a combination of the two. Meatloaf made with all dark turkey was sufficiently moist and flavorful but it was still so high in fat and calories that we may as well have made it with ground beef. The meatloaf made with all white turkey was a total disaster; it was so dry and stiff that it resembled a foam block in both taste and texture. This left the combination of ground white and dark meat. This turkey produced a moist loaf that would satisfy even the most avid beef lover. Now that we had settled on the kind of ground turkey for our meatloaf, we began experimenting with binders.

Most meatloaf has some sort of binder. When experimenting with various recipes, we learned that those prepared without a binder were coarse-textured and dense, like a big hamburger. We tried a wide range of binders, from cereal and oatmeal to crackers and bread crumbs. After trying them all, we found that bread crumbs provided the best texture without adding an off flavor or superfluous fat. We also found that a little bit of whole milk and several eggs helped to bind the meatloaf together and provided some added richness.

In addition to bread crumbs, milk, and eggs, the tasters unanimously approved of sautéed onion and several cloves of garlic to flavor the mixture. Although these aromatics added time to the preparation, their contribution to the overall flavor was undeniable. We found it was important to sweat these ingredients in a sauté pan before adding them to the meat mixture, otherwise they would become too overpowering in the dish. In addition to onion and garlic, a healthy dose of chopped thyme and parsley gave our low-fat meatloaf a fuller, more complex flavor.

Now that we were satisfied with the flavor of our meatloaf, all that was left was to determine the best cooking method. We tried baking the meatloaf in a traditional loaf pan, but this produced an unappealing meatloaf since the sides of the loaf steamed rather than baked. We therefore

made a free-form loaf and baked it on a wire rack set on a baking sheet that was covered in foil. This method allowed the top as well as the sides to get brown, creating a delicious caramelized exterior. As for oven temperatures, we tried a wide range of heat levels (and times) and learned that it was optimal to cook the loaf at a low temperature for a longer time since this helped ensure a juicy meatloaf.

We thought we were done at this point, but tasters asked for more in the form of a sauce or a glaze to complement the meat. So we returned to the kitchen and experimented with a number of sweet and sticky ingredients, such as honey, syrup, jams, and preserves. Good old ketchup mixed with a little bit of brown sugar turned out to be the winner. Brushed on the loaf before baking and then again halfway through the cooking time, this glaze hugged the loaf and reminded us of the best home-cooked full-fat meatloaf we had tasted.



Excellent

Turkey Meatloaf with Brown Sugar-Ketchup Glaze

SERVES 8

Do not use ground turkey breast meat (sometimes also labeled as 99 percent fat free) or the meatloaf will be very dry and grainy.

- 1 medium onion, chopped fine
- 2 medium garlic cloves, minced or pressed through a garlic press (about 2 teaspoons)
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- Salt
- 1/2 cup milk or plain yogurt
- 2 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme leaves
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 pounds 93 percent lean ground turkey
- 1 1/3 cups fresh bread crumbs (see page 11)
- 1/4 cup minced fresh parsley leaves
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
- 4 teaspoons cider or white vinegar

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1. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil and place a wire rack on top; set aside. Fold a piece of heavy-duty foil into a 10 by 6-inch rectangle; set aside.

2. Combine the onion, garlic, oil, and ¼ teaspoon salt in a medium skillet. Cover and cook over medium-low heat, stirring often, until the onion has softened, 8 to 10 minutes; set aside to cool. In a medium bowl, whisk the milk, eggs, thyme, mustard, Worcestershire, hot sauce, pepper, and ¼ teaspoon salt together.

3. In a large bowl, mix the turkey, bread crumbs, parsley, cooked onion mixture, and egg mixture together with your hands until uniformly combined. Press the mixture together into a compact mass, then turn it out onto the foil rectangle. Using your hands, press the meat into an evenly thick loaf about 2 inches tall and 1 inch smaller than the foil on all sides.

4. Transfer the foil and meatloaf to the center of the prepared wire rack. Stir the ketchup, sugar, and vinegar together, then brush half of the mixture evenly over the meatloaf. Bake the meatloaf for 45 minutes.

5. Brush the meatloaf with the remaining ketchup glaze, and continue to bake until the center of the loaf registers 160 degrees on an instant-read thermometer, about 15 to 20 minutes longer. Cool at least 20 minutes before slicing into 1-inch-thick pieces.

PER SERVING: Cal 260; Fat 10 g; Sat fat 3 g; Chol 120 mg; Carb 18 g; Protein 26 g; Fiber 1 g; Sodium 480 mg

TURKEY BURGERS

WHETHER GRILLED, FRIED, OR BROILED, burgers are one of America's favorite foods. Unfortunately, a good hamburger is usually made with the fattiest meat you can find (about 34 grams of fat for a 5-ounce burger). To satisfy a burger craving, you can try a low-fat turkey burger. But in our experience, these burger substitutes are pretty bad—dry, tasteless, and colorless. We set out to develop a turkey burger that would satisfy

us whenever the craving for a burger struck.

We first struggled with the type of ground turkey to use. The turkey burgers we made from ground dark meat cooked up juicy and flavorful, but did not save us much on fat or calories, considering that, like typical all-beef burgers, they were between 15 and 20 percent fat. The burgers made with white turkey meat were as dry as could be. There was so little fat in them that they tended to burn when cooking and boy, were they bland. The burgers made with 93 percent lean ground turkey were promising. They had a decent, meaty flavor and were relatively juicy. We figured this was a good start and, with a little help, we knew this meat would make a flavorful burger.

We noticed first that our patties lacked heft and moistness. We began to correct this by adding a combination of milk and bread (also called a panada) to the turkey meat—the same mixture we used to lend moisture to meatballs. The resulting burgers tasted, well, like meatballs, and the patties had an unattractive pale color. We tried a whole host of other ingredients (mashed beans, rehydrated mushrooms, and minced tempeh among them), but they were no better. All of these ingredients either gave the burgers a strong flavor that overshadowed the turkey or failed to add any moistness to the patties. Then we stumbled onto fat-free ricotta. It was exactly what we were looking for. The ricotta gave the burgers a moist, chewy texture and its mild flavor allowed the turkey flavor to stand out.

Flavoring the turkey patties was tricky, though. We tried every ingredient in the test kitchen we thought would add a meaty flavor to the burgers, from teriyaki sauce and fermented black beans to olive paste. After eating a lot of bad (and some good) burgers, we found two ingredients that gave our turkey burgers the optimal beef flavor: Worcestershire sauce and Dijon mustard. Whether by association (because these are condiments that typically complement beef) or pure chemistry, these sharp and tangy flavors made our turkey burger taste like a real beef burger (or at least close enough to satisfy our craving).

Because turkey must be cooked to well done for safety reasons, figuring out how to maintain