

TUSCAN MEATLOAF

Serves 10 - 14

By Dennis W. Viau; adapted from several recipes

Meatloaf is boring. You'd only serve it to your family because they are supposed to be forgiving and patient. With this recipe you can feel proud to make this meatloaf for even the most special of occasions. It looks beautiful and it has a delicious flavor. I gave this recipe to a friend who *loves* meatloaf. His wife made it for him and he called me to say it was the best meatloaf he had ever tasted.



Ingredients:

½ pound (227g) lean ground beef
½ pound (227g) lean ground pork
½ pound (227g) ricotta cheese, part skim milk or whole¹ (see notes at end)
1 large egg
2 egg yolks
¼ cup (28g) freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Freshly grated nutmeg to taste
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
½ teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley
½ cup (61g) bread crumbs (if needed)²
¼ pound (113g) prosciutto, thinly sliced (about 8-10 slices)
Kitchen string
2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon olive oil
¼ cup (60ml) dry white wine

Directions:

Mix together the ground meat, ricotta, egg, egg yolks, Parmesan, nutmeg, salt, pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, and parsley. Shape mixture into a loaf. If the mixture is too moist to hold a shape, add bread crumbs, about ½ cup, until the mixture firms enough to hold a loaf shape.

Lay out pieces of string—one long piece to tie the loaf around its length and three shorter ones for tying the sides. Arrange the slices of prosciutto on the strings, overlapping the edges, and place the loaf on the prosciutto. Wrap the loaf in the prosciutto slices, completely covering the loaf. Tie gently with string.

Heat the butter and oil in a heavy skillet, and brown the loaf all over, about 3 minutes per side, including the ends, over medium-low heat, turning it carefully with the aid of 2 spatulas or flat tongs. Transfer to a small baking pan and add the wine. Bake at 350°F (175°C) for 45 minutes to 1 hour (internal temperature of 150°F (65°C)), until the loaf is firm to the touch, adding more wine at 15-minute intervals to keep the pan from baking dry.

Transfer the meat to a platter and let rest for 10 to 15 minutes. Skim off the fat from the pan juices and strain. Remove the string from the loaf and slice. Pour the hot juices over slices and garnish with parsley.

The **Step by Step** begins on the next page.

★★★★★

STEP-BY-STEP

1



I like to measure and assemble all my ingredients in advance, my *mise en place*. It helps me not to forget anything. That metal thing toward the front is my nutmeg grater. I work with fresh nutmeg, but if you don't have a grater you can use the ground nutmeg sold on the spice aisle in the grocery store. The dark bottle in back is olive oil.

2



Combine the ground meat, ricotta, egg, egg yolks, Parmesan, nutmeg, salt, pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, and parsley. I believe the best way to mix these ingredients is with my hands. I add the bread crumbs after combining the other ingredients.

3



Here is the meat mixture, ready to shape into a loaf. Because Tuscan Meatloaf is so popular in my home, I always make two loafs. I freeze slices for eating later as part of my Lazy Man Meals.

4



I start the wrapping and tying by laying down the strings first. I cut one long string that will tie the loaf from end to end. The three shorter strings running across the long one are for tying up the sides.

5



Next, I lay the slices of prosciutto over the strings, overlapping by about an inch or two in the center. The single slices at the top and the bottom are for wrapping the ends of the loaf.

6



Shape the meat into a loaf and place it in the center of your prosciutto. Wrap the ends first and then bring up the side slices to overlap along the top.

7

This is how the loaf should look after it is wrapped in prosciutto. The next step is to tie it.

8

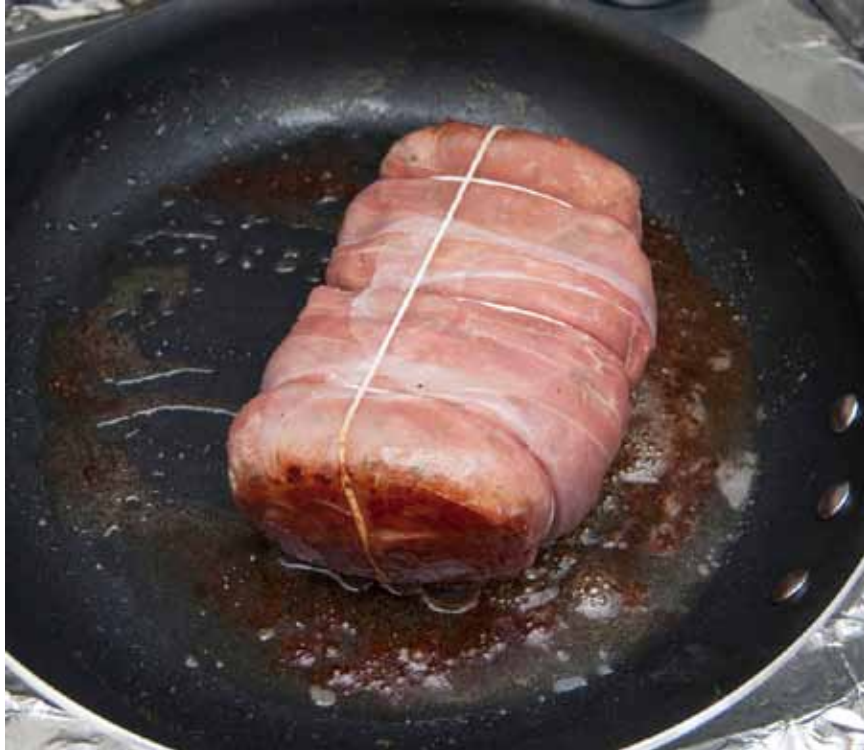
Tie the side strings first and then finish by tying the long string to hold in the ends. Don't pull the strings so tightly that they cut into the loaf. Just bring them up snug. This is ready for browning.

9



Heat the pan and add the oil and butter. When the butter stops sizzling, add the meat. It should be browned over medium-low heat. I brown the ends first, as these are a little more difficult. I either hold it up with my hands or I use a pair of spatulas. Brown for 3 minutes and then turn to brown the other end.

10



Brown the top, bottom, and sides, 3 minutes each.

11



As I mentioned above, I usually make two when I make Tuscan Meatloaf. Although they looked a little ragged when first wrapped, they get smooth in the browning process. These are ready for the oven. Pour the wine into the bottom of the roasting pan and add more wine later to keep the liquid from boiling dry.

12



I use a digital thermometer with a probe when roasting meat. Insert the probe into the center of the meat and then place it in the oven. The wire leads out of the oven and connects to the controller. I want this to cook to an internal temperature of 150°F (65°C). Although the oven shows only 143°F, the meat just went into the oven, so the temperature registering on the controller hasn't come up all the way yet.

13



Fresh from the oven. Let them rest for 15 to 20 minutes to allow the juices to migrate back to the center of the meatloaf again. Remove the string before carving and serving.

14



Sliced and ready to eat. This meatloaf is moist and tender, and it garners praises whenever I serve it. Even people who don't like meatloaf enjoy my Tuscan Meatloaf. This is a meatloaf you can feel proud to serve.

Notes:

¹ Sometimes I spread the ricotta on paper towels and set aside to let the towels absorb moisture if the cheese seems too moist.

² Although the original recipe did not include the use of bread crumbs, I found the meat mixture to be too wet. Maybe the original recipe used small eggs. Whenever I make this meatloaf I always need to add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of bread crumbs.