

Meatloaf With Mushroom Gravy

For the Meatloaf

2 pounds ground chuck
1 pound ground brisket or beef short ribs
1½ cups panko crumbs
Kosher salt and black pepper to taste
1 teaspoon paprika
1 tablespoon thyme
½ cup heavy cream
1 finely minced onion
2 finely minced garlic cloves
4 ounces chunk bacon
2-3 large eggs
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon Maggi seasoning
1 teaspoon beef bouillon paste
½ teaspoon powdered bay leaf
¼ cup minced parsley
Olive oil for coating
Flaky salt to finish

For the Brown-Flour Mushroom Gravy

1 pound cremini mushrooms
6 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons fresh thyme
Salt and pepper to taste
4 tablespoons flour
2-3 cups beef stock
½ teaspoon beef bouillon paste
1 teaspoon Maggi seasoning

For the Meatloaf

In a dry skillet, toast the panko crumbs over medium-high heat, stirring constantly until the crumbs are evenly browned. Season the crumbs with salt, pepper, paprika, and 1 teaspoon of thyme. Divide the crumbs in half, and set aside.

Cut the bacon into a very fine dice. Cook over low heat in a skillet until most of the fat is rendered, and the bacon is just beginning to brown. Do not let it become crisp. Add the minced onion, and continue to cook covered over low heat for several minutes. The onion should be translucent and tender, but not browned. Add the minced garlic, and cook for 2 more minutes. Let this mixture cool, then set it aside.

In a large mixing bowl, place the ground meats, 2 teaspoons of thyme, kosher salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste, half of the breadcrumbs, and the bacon-onion mixture. Mix the other half of the panko crumbs with the cream, and add it to the meat mixture. (Do not try to mix the crumbs and cream ahead of time because it will simply clump, making it difficult to mix.)

In a small bowl, beat 2 eggs with the Worcestershire sauce, Maggi seasoning, the bouillon paste, and the powdered bay leaf. Add the egg mixture to the meat mixture, along with the minced parsley.

With your fingers, gently, but thoroughly, mix all of the ingredients. Do not over mix or your meatloaf will be too compacted. If the loaf seems too dry, add another beaten egg.

Line a baking dish with a buttered piece of parchment paper, leaving the buttered side up. Shape the meatloaf into a large smooth oval, and place it on the parchment paper in the baking dish. Refrigerate the meat loaf for ½ hour.

Brush the loaf with olive oil, and sprinkle the top with with pepper and and a little flaky salt or *fleur de sel*.

Place the rack in the lower part of your oven, and preheat it to 325°.

Bake the loaf for 1½-1¾ hours or until the internal temperature reaches 155-160°. Move the loaf to an upper rack and broil for 2-3 minutes to brown the top. Drain away any accumulated oil at the bottom of the baking dish. Remove the loaf to a large platter, being careful to peel away the parchment paper. Let the loaf rest for 10-15 minutes before serving in thick slices.

For the Brown-Flour Mushroom Gravy

Slice the mushrooms thinly. Mince the shallot and garlic cloves. Heat 2 tablespoons of the butter and 1 tablespoon olive in a skillet over high heat. When the foam subsides, fry half the mushrooms until nicely browned. Crowding them will prohibit browning by creating too much liquid. Scrape them into a bowl. Add 2 more tablespoons of butter and 1 tablespoon of olive oil to the skillet. Following the same procedure, fry the other half of the mushrooms. A few minutes before they are done, add the minced shallots. Then one minute before the mushrooms are done, stir in the garlic. Scrape into the bowl. Season the mushrooms with salt, pepper, and the thyme.

In the same skillet over medium heat, melt the final 2 tablespoons of the butter. Whisk in the flour, and continue whisking vigorously until the flour begins to take on a golden brown color. Do not, however, allow it to burn. Add 2 cups of the beef stock, and continue cooking and whisking until the gravy begins to thicken. Whisk in the beef bouillon paste and the Maggi seasoning. If the gravy has become too thick, add as much of the remaining cup of beef stock to thin it out to your desired consistency. Stir in the mushrooms, and cook for at least 2 more minutes. Taste for salt and pepper.

The gravy can be made a day or two in advance if you wish. Just bring it back to the simmer when needed. Serve in a gravy boat. Allow your guests to spread the gravy over their slices of meatloaf.