

Free-Form Fennel Seed Meat Loaf

Recipe by Chef Anya Fernald

ACTIVE: 40 MIN TOTAL: 2 HR
8 SERVINGS

"I season this meat loaf with fennel and celery seeds so it's more like a giant *polpette* [meatball]," says Fernald. For a moist meat loaf, she says it's best to use ground meat that's at least 20 percent fat.

1 cup fresh bread crumbs
½ cup whole milk
⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
2 medium carrots, finely chopped
1 celery rib, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons tomato paste
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons ground fennel seeds
2 teaspoons dried oregano
2 teaspoons celery seeds
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
2¾ pounds ground beef chuck (80 percent lean)

1. Preheat the oven to 425° and line the bottom of a roasting pan with parchment paper. In a bowl, soak the bread crumbs in the milk.
2. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil until shimmering. Add the onion, carrots, celery, garlic and a generous pinch each of salt and pepper and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are very soft and golden, about 15 minutes. Scrape the vegetables into a large bowl and let it cool. Add the tomato paste, eggs, milk soaked bread crumbs, ground fennel, oregano, celery seeds, crushed red pepper, and 2 teaspoons of salt and ½ teaspoon of black pepper and stir to form a paste. Using your hands, gently work in the ground beef until combined; do not over-mix.
3. Transfer the meat mixture to the roasting pan and shape it into an oval loaf about 10 inches long. Bake the meat loaf for 50 to 60 minutes, until browned and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center registers 150°. Let the meat loaf rest for 15 minutes, then cut into thick slices and serve

MAKE AHEAD The baked meat loaf can be covered and refrigerated for up to 3 days. Cover with foil and reheat in a 325° oven.

WINE Cabernet Franc often has a slight herbal edge, which goes nicely with this rich, herb-scented meat loaf. Try one from California, like the 2010 Lang & Reed North Coast or one from France's Loire Valley, like the 2010 Catherine & Pierre Breton Bourgueil Trinch!

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"The Locavore Empire of Anya Fernald"

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