

GOLF

FOOD

The secret to making perfect meatloaf, according to a golf-club chef



Welcome to Clubhouse Eats, where we celebrate the game's most delectable food and drink. Hope you brought your appetites.

Making meatloaf is like making par: there are lots of ways to do it, and it's rarely a bad thing.

Sometimes, it's great.

As executive chef at [Cliffs Valley](#), which is part of a seven-club collection of luxury golf communities in the Carolinas, Richard Gras makes a first-rate meatloaf, seasoned with oregano, thyme and red pepper flakes, and studded with diced pickle spears. But since meatloaf comes in countless iterations, we asked Chef Gras to lay out some basic ground rules for preparing the comforting ground-beef dish.

1. The meat of the matter

No one likes a dry meatloaf, but you don't want it too fatty, either. Gras recommends 80/20 ground beef (that figure refers to the lean meat-to-fat percentage), which, he says, has "just enough fat to keep the meatloaf moist."

2. Time, temperature, shape and size

All of these traits are related. The lower the temp, the longer the cooking time (and vice versa), which in turn is influenced by the size of the loaf. What's important, Gras says, is making an evenly shaped meatloaf so that it cooks evenly. For his meatloaf, Gras goes with 325 degrees for 45-55 minutes. That relatively low temperature helps keep the shape of the meatloaf while allowing for some browning. To that end, Gras also recommends not covering the meatloaf. You want a little caramelizing on top.

3. Must-have ingredients

People mix all kinds of things into their meatloaf. Gras uses buttermilk and panko, and he highly recommends it. The combination (he lets the panko soak in the buttermilk for about 15 minutes before blending in the meat) creates what is known as a panade (a mix of starch and liquid), and it acts as a binder, keeping the meatloaf intact and moist.

4. Must-avoid ingredients

There aren't many. But Gras advises against using rosemary, which has a strong aroma that can overpower the meat.

5. Drop the pan

Before you bake your meatloaf, drop the pan on the countertop a few times. That will help get rid of any air bubbles and ensure that the meat is in there snugly, which is key for even cooking.