



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Thanksgiving Meatloaf Dinner

Eating a nutritious diet is not an all or nothing behavior. In recent years, the public has been swarmed with *health* information that demonizes all processed and boxed food. For the average American, consuming a diet that is free of any processed food is nearly impossible due to time and budget constraints. Although many may promote consuming foods that are closest to the farm, with the least amount of processing, most credible health professionals encourage building a healthy eating pattern that can be maintained and adopted with the least amount of burden. This doesn't mean that one should go to the extreme and glean from the last statement that any processed food in the diet is okay. The overall nutrition quality of any food should be evaluated.

Ideally, a healthy eating pattern should be comprised of 80 to 90% high-nutrition, quality foods. This means foods that are mostly made up of nutrients that are good for you and have minimal amounts sodium and empty calories from unhealthy fat or added sugars. It is also best to aim for foods with the fewest ingredients and mostly ingredients you can pronounce. Using this criteria, there are plenty of processed foods that qualify.

For example, instant potatoes are just dehydrated potato flakes. They still provide key nutrients and offer the advantage a quick and easy preparation. Prepared dehydrated potatoes are good sources of vitamin C and the B vitamins. They also supply protein and fiber. This is just one example that not all processed food is bad. Plain oatmeal along with many frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are some other examples.

The nutrition quality of the diet can be immensely improved by cooking more meals at home, filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, or canned), choosing lean meats and plant based proteins and mostly nonfat or low-fat dairy products, choosing mostly low sodium and no added sugar items, choosing mostly whole wheat or whole grain products, and using mostly healthy fats in cooking. If you need to rely on some processed food items to meet these suggestions, then do so. You are not failing. One way to build a high-nutrition, quality diet is to aim for 80-90% of the items in your meals by following this guidance.

This meal uses a combination of high-nutrition, quality ingredients that are fresh, boxed, and canned while using an item or two that may not be of the highest nutrition quality. In the end, the meal is tasty, quick, easy, and high in nutrients. Hopefully, it becomes one of your favorites and one of your go-to meals rather than using a drive-thru for your dinner. Just be aware that they're high in carbs that boost your blood sugar.



Ingredients: 4 servings

- 2 lbs. lean ground turkey (93% lean)
- 1 box stuffing mix
- 4 egg whites or 2 whole eggs
- ½ cup ketchup
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1½ cup instant potato flakes
- ¼ cup nonfat Greek yogurt
- 1 pound fresh green beans
- 1 tsp. dried basil
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 14-15 oz. can of whole berry cranberry sauce (optional)

Directions: Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

1. Place the ground turkey in a large mixing bowl. Add the stuffing mix, eggs, and ketchup. Using hands or a wooden spoon, work the mixture until the stuffing mix and eggs are incorporated throughout the meat.
2. Line a 9x5 loaf pan with foil allowing at least 3 inches hanging over the sides, lengthwise (this makes for easy removal from the pan). Lightly spray the pan with cooking spray. Pour the meatloaf mixture in the pan. Pat gently to evenly distribute the mixture and then fold the foil over the top. Do not press the foil into the meat mixture.
3. Place the pan in the oven and bake for 60-70 minutes or until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees F. Remove the loaf from the oven and let rest 10 minutes before removing it from the pan.
4. While the meatloaf is cooking, wash, rinse, and dry the green beans. Snip the ends off each bean. Place the beans in a microwave safe glass dish, drizzle the olive oil over the beans and then sprinkle in the garlic powder and basil. Add 2 tbsp. water. Toss the beans to be sure beans are coated. Cover.
5. After the meatloaf is removed from the oven and while it is resting, place the green beans in the microwave and for 8-10 minutes.
6. In a medium-sized sauce pan, bring the chicken broth and butter to a low boil and then remove from the heat. Quickly add the instant potato flakes and toss with a fork. Add the yogurt and mix gently.
7. Remove the meatloaf from the pan by gently pounding the pan on the counter top. Unfold the foil and gently use it to lift the loaf out of the pan. Cut the loaf in half. Wrap one half of the meatloaf in the foil to be used for another time.
8. Serve each plate by place ¼ of the potatoes, green beans on the plate. Cut the remaining half of the meatloaf into 4 equal slices and then place one slice on each plate. Top each slice of meatloaf with 1-2 tbsp. cranberry sauce (optional).

Tips

- Consider freezing the remaining half of the meatloaf for a meal later in the month. Just remove meatloaf from the freezer in the morning to thaw. Remove the foil and then microwave to warm.
- To decrease the cooking time, make the mixture into 8-12 equal sized meatballs and then place the balls in a muffin tin. Bake for 25-30 minutes or place in a microwave safe glass dish, cover and microwave for 8-10 minutes.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.