

Prep Time	25 minutes
Cook Time	35 minutes
Resting Time	10 minutes
Total Time	1 hour 10 minutes
Yield	12 individual cupcakes (6 main course servings)
Difficulty Level	Medium
Heat & Flavor Intensity	Medium-Bold (Smoky, Savory, Tangy, with optional mild heat)

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Ingredients List

For the Meatloaf Base

- 1.5 lbs (680g) Ground Beef (80/20 lean-to-fat ratio)
- 0.5 lbs (225g) Ground Pork or Mild Italian Sausage
- 12 strips Standard-cut Bacon (avoid thick-cut for optimal crispness)

- 3/4 cup Panko Breadcrumbs
- 1/2 cup Whole Milk
- 1 large Egg, lightly beaten
- 1 small Yellow Onion, finely minced
- 3 cloves Garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire Sauce
- 1 tsp Smoked Paprika
- 1 tsp Garlic Powder
- 1 tsp Kosher Salt
- 1/2 tsp Freshly Cracked Black Pepper

For the Smoky BBQ Glaze

- 3/4 cup Sweet and Tangy BBQ Sauce

- 2 tbsp Apple Cider Vinegar
- 1 tbsp Brown Sugar (packed)
- 1/2 tsp Hot Sauce (optional for an extra kick)

For the Mashed Potato “Frosting”

- 2 lbs (900g) Yukon Gold Potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 4 tbsp Unsalted Butter, melted
- 1/2 cup Heavy Cream or Whole Milk, warm
- 1/2 cup Sharp Cheddar Cheese, finely shredded
- 1/2 tsp Garlic Powder
- Salt & White Pepper to taste
- Fresh Chives or Green Onions, finely sliced (for garnish)

Step-by-Step Cooking Instructions

1. Prep the Muffin Pan & Oven: Temperature: 375°F (190°C).

Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). Spray a standard 12-cup muffin tin thoroughly with non-stick cooking spray. Line each muffin well with one strip of bacon, wrapping it around the inside perimeter to create a ring.

2. Prepare the Panade & Meat Mixture: Ensures maximum juiciness.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the panko breadcrumbs and milk. Let sit for 5 minutes until a paste (panade) forms. Add the ground beef, ground pork, beaten egg, minced onion, minced garlic, Worcestershire sauce, smoked paprika, garlic powder, salt, and black pepper. Mix gently with clean hands until just combined. *Do not overmix, or the meatloaf will become dense.*

3. Fill the Cupcake Cups: Sized for even cooking.

Divide the meat mixture into 12 equal portions (roughly 1/3 cup each). Pack the meat tightly into the center of each bacon-lined muffin cup, gently pressing down so the bacon hugs the edges.

4. Mix & Apply the Glaze: First Bake: 25 minutes.

In a small bowl, whisk together the BBQ sauce, apple cider vinegar, brown sugar, and hot sauce. Spoon 1 tablespoon of the glaze over the top of each meatloaf cupcake. Bake in the preheated oven for 25 minutes.

5. Whip the Potato Frosting: Smooth texture needed for piping.

While the meatloaf bakes, place the cubed potatoes in a pot of cold salted water. Bring to a boil over high heat and cook for 12–15 minutes until fork-tender. Drain well. Mash thoroughly with melted butter, warm cream, cheddar cheese, garlic powder, salt, and pepper until silky smooth. Transfer to a piping bag fitted with a star tip (or a zip-top bag with the corner cut off).

6. Broil & Pipe: Second Bake: 5–8 minutes.

Remove the muffin pan from the oven. Carefully brush or spoon the remaining glaze over the tops. Return to the oven under the broil setting (high) for 3–5 minutes until the bacon edges crisp up and the glaze bubbles. Remove from the oven and let rest in the pan for 5 minutes.

7. Frost & Serve: Final garnish.

Pipe the warm mashed potatoes onto each meatloaf cupcake just like cupcake frosting. Garnish with chopped fresh chives or additional bacon crumbles. Use an offset spatula or spoon to lift each cupcake out of the pan and serve immediately.

Recipe Tips for Success

- **Choose the Right Bacon:** Standard-cut bacon works best. Thick-cut bacon takes too long to render in a muffin tin and may end up rubbery at the base.
- **Drain Excess Fat:** Meatloaf and bacon will render fat as they cook. Before piping the mashed potatoes, gently spoon or drain off excess grease from each muffin well to prevent soggy bottoms.
- **Make-Ahead Friendly:** You can assemble the meatloaf cups in the muffin pan up to 24 hours in advance. Store covered in the refrigerator and add 5 extra minutes to the initial bake time.

Storage & Reheating

- **Refrigeration:** Store leftover cupcakes in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

- Freezing: Wrap un-frosted meatloaf cups individually in plastic wrap and aluminum foil. Freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the fridge before reheating.
- Reheating: Reheat in a 350°F (175°C) oven or air fryer for 10–12 minutes until warmed through. Microwave heating works in a pinch (1–2 minutes), though the bacon will lose its crispness.

Complete Nutritional Information

Calculated per single serving (1 meatloaf cupcake with potato topping).

Nutrient	Amount per Serving	% Daily Value*
Calories	385 kcal	—
Total Fat	22 g	28%
<i>Saturated Fat</i>	9 g	45%
<i>Trans Fat</i>	0.5 g	—
Cholesterol	95 mg	32%
Sodium	680 mg	30%
Total Carbohydrate	24 g	9%
<i>Dietary Fiber</i>	2 g	7%
<i>Total Sugars</i>	9 g	—
Protein	22 g	44%
Vitamin D	0.4 mcg	2%
Calcium	85 mg	7%
Iron	2.4 mg	13%
Potassium	480 mg	10%