Prep Time: 15 minutes | Cook Time: 25–30 minutes | Total Time: 40–45 minutes
Yield: 12 meatloaf muffins (6 servings) | Intensity Level: Easy (Low–Moderate)

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Introduction

Meatloaf muffins take everything you love about classic meatloaf — the savory beef, the tangy glaze, the comforting texture — and bake it into perfectly portioned, muffin-sized portions. These little gems cook in a fraction of the time of a traditional meatloaf (25 minutes versus 60+), develop crispy edges all around, and are ideal for meal prep, weeknight dinners,

or feeding a crowd. Each “muffin” is a complete, satisfying protein-packed entrée that pairs beautifully with mashed potatoes, roasted vegetables, or a simple green salad.

Ingredients

For the Meatloaf Muffins

- 1 lb (450 g) lean ground beef (85/15 or 90/10 recommended)
- ½ lb (225 g) ground pork (or substitute additional ground beef)
- ¾ cup (45 g) plain breadcrumbs (panko works well)
- ½ cup (120 ml) whole milk
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 small onion, finely diced (about ½ cup)
- 1 small green bell pepper, finely diced (about ½ cup) — optional
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp ketchup

- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- ¼ tsp smoked paprika

For the Glaze

- ½ cup (120 ml) ketchup
- 2 tbsp brown sugar (packed)
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- ½ tsp garlic powder

Equipment

- 12-cup standard muffin tin
- Nonstick cooking spray or olive oil
- Large mixing bowl
- Small saucepan (for glaze)
- Instant-read meat thermometer (recommended)

Time & Intensity Breakdown

Stage	Time	Intensity	What’s Happening
Preheat & prep	5 min	Low	Oven to 400°F (200°C); grease muffin tin
Make glaze	3–4 min	Low	Simmer glaze ingredients until thickened
Mix meatloaf	5–7 min	Moderate	Combine ingredients gently — do not overmix
Portion into tin	3–4 min	Low	Shape 12 equal balls, press into cups
First bake	15 min	Low (passive)	Meatloaf muffins set and begin to brown
Glaze & finish	8–10 min	Low (passive)	Brush with glaze, bake until 160°F internal
Rest	5 min	Low (passive)	Muffins firm up and juices redistribute

Total active time: ~18 minutes | Total passive time: ~25 minutes

Instructions

Step 1: Preheat and Prep (5 minutes | Low Intensity)

Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C). Generously spray a 12-cup standard muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray or brush each cup with olive oil. Be thorough — lean beef can stick. Set the tin aside.

Step 2: Make the Glaze (3–4 minutes | Low Intensity)

In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, combine the ketchup, brown sugar, apple cider vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, and garlic powder. Stir constantly until the sugar dissolves and the mixture begins to bubble gently, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside. (Alternatively, whisk together in a microwave-safe bowl and heat for 45–60 seconds.)

Step 3: Mix the Meatloaf (5–7 minutes | Moderate Intensity)

In a large mixing bowl, combine the breadcrumbs and milk. Let sit for 2 minutes until the crumbs absorb the liquid — this is your panade, which keeps the meatloaf moist. Add the beaten egg, diced onion, bell pepper (if using), minced garlic, ketchup, Worcestershire sauce, salt, pepper, thyme, and smoked paprika. Stir until evenly combined.

Add the ground beef and ground pork. Using your hands, mix gently and briefly — just until everything comes together, about 30–45 seconds. Overmixing is the #1 cause of tough meatloaf. Stop as soon as no dry patches remain.

Step 4: Portion into the Muffin Tin (3–4 minutes | Low Intensity)

Divide the mixture into 12 equal portions (roughly ⅓ cup each, or about 2.5 oz per muffin). Roll each portion into a ball and place it into a muffin cup, pressing down lightly so the top is flat. Do not pack too tightly — a light press is enough.

Step 5: First Bake (15 minutes | Low Intensity, Passive)

Bake on the middle rack for 15 minutes. The muffins will set, shrink slightly from the sides, and begin to brown. Remove the tin from the oven.

Step 6: Glaze and Finish (8–10 minutes | Low Intensity, Passive)

Brush each muffin generously with the prepared glaze — about 1 teaspoon per muffin, using roughly half the glaze. Return the tin to the oven and bake an additional 8–10 minutes, until the glaze is bubbly and caramelized and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center of a muffin reads 160°F (71°C). If you'd like a deeper glaze, brush on the remaining glaze at the 6-minute mark.

Step 7: Rest (5 minutes | Low Intensity, Passive)

Let the meatloaf muffins rest in the tin for 5 minutes. This allows the juices to redistribute so the muffins hold together when lifted out. Run a butter knife or small offset spatula around the edges and lift each muffin out. If any excess fat has pooled, blot the bottoms gently with a paper towel.

Serving Suggestions

Serve warm with creamy mashed potatoes, buttered egg noodles, roasted green beans, or a crisp garden salad. Leftovers keep beautifully — see storage notes below.

Storage & Reheating

- Refrigerator: Store in an airtight container for up to 4 days.

- Freezer: Freeze cooled muffins individually on a tray, then transfer to a freezer bag for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the fridge.

- Reheating: Microwave 60–90 seconds per muffin, or reheat covered in a 350°F (175°C) oven for 10–12 minutes.

Nutrition Information (Per Muffin, Based on 12 Servings)

Values are estimates and will vary by brand and exact ingredients used.

Nutrient	Amount per Muffin
Calories	~185 kcal
Total Fat	~11 g
— Saturated Fat	~4 g
Cholesterol	~55 mg
Sodium	~310 mg
Total Carbohydrates	~8 g
— Sugars	~5 g
Protein	~13 g