

Cheesy Meat Loaf with Bacon and Herbs  
From the Kitchen of Williams-Sonoma

Prep Time: 20 minutes  
Cook Time: 80 minutes  
Servings: 8

**Ingredients:**

3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil  
2 carrots, cut into 1/4-inch dice  
2 celery stalks, cut into 1/4-inch dice  
1 onion, cut into 1/4-inch dice  
3 garlic cloves, minced  
2 1/4 cups (135g) fresh bread crumbs (from a crustless baguette)  
1/3 cup (80 ml) warm water  
5 Tbs. minced fresh flat-leaf parsley  
2 oz. (60g) mozzarella cheese, shredded, plus 6 oz., (185g) cut into 1/2-inch cubes  
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste  
2 lb. (1 kg) ground beef (80% lean)  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
1/2 tsp. minced fresh thyme leaves  
8 thick-cut bacon slices

**Directions:**

Position a rack in the lower third of an oven and preheat to 350°F. Coat the bottom of a roasting pan with 1 Tbs. of the oil.

In a deep sauté pan over medium-high heat, warm 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. Add the carrots, celery and onion and sauté until tender and starting to caramelize, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the garlic and sauté for 1 minute. Remove from the heat and let cool until slightly warm, about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, soak 1 1/2 cups (90g) of the bread crumbs with the warm water. In another bowl, combine the remaining 3/4 cup (45g) bread crumbs, the 1 Tbs. parsley, the remaining 1 Tbs. olive oil and the shredded mozzarella and season with salt and pepper.

Gently squeeze the soaked bread crumbs to remove excess moisture and place in a large bowl. Add the beef, vegetable mixture, eggs and the remaining 4 tablespoons parsley, the thyme and the cubed mozzarella and use your hands to combine. Season with salt and pepper.

Place the meat loaf mixture in the prepared pan, leaving 1/2-inch (12mm) of space at the top. Cover the meat loaf with the cheese-breadcrumb mixture. Place the bacon strips lengthwise across the top of the meat loaf to cover, overlapping them slightly, Trim off the edges so there is no overhang.

Bake until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center of the meat loaf registers 165°F, about 1 hour and 10 minutes. Let the meat loaf rest for 5 minutes before slicing.