**Country Ham Loaf with Dried Cherry Sauce**

Holiday Fare, Favorite Williamsburg Recipes—by Gonzales

Our favorite ham loaf recipe—a real winner.

INGREDIENTS:

For the ham loaf;

1 tablespoon butter

1 medium onion, finely chopped (about 1 cup)

1½ pounds ground fresh pork

1 pound ground sugar-cured smoked ham

½ pound ground Virginia ham (country ham)

NOTE: Can substitute 1½ pounds favorite ham—recommend combination of smoked and honey cured ham

1 egg

¾ cup buttermilk

3 tablespoons Dijon-style mustard

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley (1 tablespoon dried parsley)

½ teaspoon black pepper

½ cup fresh bread crumbs (about 2 slices bread—processed in a food processor)

For the dried cherry sauce;

2 tablespoons butter

3-4 shallots, chopped (about ½ cup)

1½ tablespoons all-purpose flour

1 cup dry red wine (recommend Zinfandel)

1 cup ruby port wine

1 cup low-sodium chicken broth

1 bay leaf

¾ cup dried cherries

PREPARATION:

Ham Loaf;

Preheat oven to 375°

Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat and cook the onions 3-5 minutes, or until soft. Allow to cool.

Place the pork, smoked ham and country ham in a large bowl. Add cooked onions.

Whisk together the egg, buttermilk, mustard, parsley and black pepper in a small bowl.

Briefly mix the egg mixture and bread crumbs into the meat mixture. Do not over mix. Form the meat mixture into a loaf and place the loaf on a slightly buttered or parchment-lined baking sheet (I prefer parchment-lined for ease of cleaning). Bake for 1 hour, or until a meat thermometer reads 170°.

Dried Cherry Sauce;

Melt butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat.

Add shallots and cook, stirring often, 3-4 minutes, or until softened.

Stir in flour (making a roux) using a wooden spoon. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring frequently (careful not to burn).

Carefully whisk in the red wine, port wine and broth.

Increase the heat to medium high and bring to a boil. Ensure that all the flour from the corners of the pan is incorporated.

Add the bay leaf and cherries and reduce the heat to low. Cook the sauce over low heat, stirring occasionally, about 25 minutes, or until the sauce has reduced to 2 cups.

Remove the bay leaf and season with salt and black pepper to taste.

Keep warm.

Garnish the ham loaf with fresh herbs and serve it with the dried cherry sauce.

Serves 6-8