

Authentic Cincinnati Chili

Authentic Cincinnati chili recipe with warm spices like cinnamon and cocoa. Perfect over spaghetti with cheese - a true Midwest classic!

15 min

PREP

1h 30min

COOK

1h 45min

TOTAL

6

SERVINGS

Medium

DIFFICULTY

Ingredients

- 2 lb ground beef
- 1 onion
- 3 clove garlic
- 2 cup beef broth
- 2 tbsp vinegar
- 2 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tbsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp allspice
- 1 tsp clove
- 1 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 bay leaf

Instructions

1 **Brown the meat**

Heat a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat (160°C/325°F). Add 2 pounds ground beef and cook for 8-10 minutes, breaking it into very fine crumbles with a wooden spoon, until no pink remains and meat is well browned.

- 2 Add 1 diced onion to the beef and cook for 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until onion is soft and translucent. Add 3 cloves minced garlic and cook for 1 minute until fragrant.
- 3 **Build the sauce base**

Pour in 2 cups water, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot with your spoon (this adds flavor). Stir until well combined and liquid is evenly distributed.
- 4 Add 2 tablespoons tomato paste and 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar, stirring until tomato paste is completely dissolved into the liquid.
- 5 **Add the spices**

Stir in 1 tablespoon chili powder, 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon, 1 teaspoon ground cumin, 1 teaspoon allspice, 1 tablespoon cocoa powder, 1 teaspoon paprika, 1 teaspoon garlic powder, 1 teaspoon onion powder, and 1 bay leaf. Mix thoroughly to distribute all spices evenly.
- 6 **Simmer the chili**

Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to low and simmer uncovered for 90 minutes, stirring every 15-20 minutes. The chili is ready when it has thickened to a sauce-like consistency that coats the back of a spoon.
- 7 **Finish and serve**

Remove bay leaf and taste for seasoning, adding salt and pepper as needed. Serve hot over cooked spaghetti noodles, topped with shredded cheese, diced onions, and beans if desired.

Tips

Toast Your Spices: Lightly toast whole spices like cinnamon sticks and cloves in a dry skillet for 30 seconds before grinding them. This intensifies their flavor and adds depth to your chili.

Achieve the Perfect Texture: Break up the ground beef thoroughly while cooking, using a potato masher or wooden spoon to create the fine, sauce-like consistency that's essential for authentic Cincinnati chili.

Low and Slow Simmering: Keep the heat at the lowest setting during the long simmer. High heat can make the spices bitter and cause the meat to become tough rather than tender.

Choose the Right Beef: Use 80/20 ground beef for the best balance of flavor and texture. Leaner meat can result in a dry, less flavorful chili, while fattier options may become greasy.

Fresh Cheese Makes a Difference: Grate your own sharp cheddar cheese rather than using pre-shredded varieties. Fresh cheese melts more smoothly and provides better flavor coverage over the hot chili.

Make It Ahead: Cincinnati chili tastes even better the next day after the flavors have had time to meld. Make a large batch and refrigerate overnight before serving for optimal flavor development.

Perfect Spaghetti Preparation: Cook your spaghetti just until al dente, as it will continue to soften slightly when the hot chili is ladled over top. Drain well to prevent diluting the chili's flavor.