

Chili
By Ali Slagle
“Our Ultimate Guide to Making the Best Chili,” by Sam Sifton
The New York Times, February 11, 2025

Total Time: 1-1/2 hours

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

Ingredients

2 tablespoons neutral oil, such as grapeseed

2 pounds ground beef, preferably 20 percent fat

Salt and pepper

1 large yellow onion, coarsely chopped

4 garlic cloves, finely chopped or grated

1 tablespoon ground cumin

1 tablespoon store-bought or homemade chili powder, plus more if needed

1 chipotle pepper in adobo plus 1 teaspoon sauce (or 1 additional tablespoon chili powder)

1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce

1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder

2 (15-ounce) cans beans (such as pinto, black or any bean you like in chili), with their liquid

1½ teaspoons apple cider vinegar, plus more if needed

Grated sharp Cheddar, sour cream, hot sauce, sliced scallions, chopped white onion, cilantro leaves, crushed tortilla or corn chips, for serving (optional)

Preparation

1. Heat the oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high. Working in batches if necessary to avoid crowding the pot, use your hands to break the beef into small chunks (about 2 inches each) and add a single layer to the pot. Season with salt and pepper, then cook, flipping once, until browned on two sides, 4 to 6 minutes. (Meat won't be cooked through.) Transfer to a bowl, leaving the fat in the pot.
2. Reduce heat to medium, add the onion and season with salt and pepper. Cook until softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the garlic, cumin and chili powder, and stir until fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Add the chipotle pepper and adobo sauce, plus the beef and any juices in the bowl. Use a spoon or potato masher to break up the beef into small pieces. Stir in the tomato sauce and cocoa powder.
4. Cover, reduce heat to low and cook, stirring frequently to avoid scorching, until the beef is tender and the sauce is flavorful, 25 to 30 minutes.
5. Add the beans, including their liquid, and cook, uncovered, stirring often, until the liquid is slightly thickened and the beans are warm, 10 to 15 minutes. Let sit for 5 minutes, then stir in the apple cider vinegar. Taste and add salt until chili is rich and loudly spiced. Eat with desired toppings. Chili keeps for up to 3 days refrigerated; warm over low heat and adjust consistency and seasonings with water, salt, vinegar and chili powder. (Leftovers will keep for up to 4 months if frozen.)