

An easy way to turn beef and chili into dinner

By Ben Mims
Los Angeles Times

Several years ago, my partner and I spent a month in San Antonio, where his family lives. We were both unemployed at the time, so we spent the days driving around the city, exploring and eating all the wonderful food. We consumed a lot of chili.

We ate the “authentic” kind, consisting of cubed beef chuck or sirloin cooked in a mole-like gravy of hydrated and pureed dried chiles, and we ate plenty of the Tex-Mex kind, in which ground beef stands in for cubed and is seasoned with ground chili powder made from a mix of dried chiles, but often of the New Mexico varietal.

Beans and tomatoes — highly contentious ingredients to add to chili in Texas — were found in several iterations we tried. After sampling so many, we decided that the ground beef version with beans — but with tomato paste and not canned tomatoes — was our favorite. It has been a staple of our quick weeknight dinners ever since.



Ben Mims/Los AngelesTimes-TNS

Lots of crunchy, sharp and creamy toppings turn a simple bowl of beef and chili into dinner in an instant.

You can use this recipe for a simple chili and then flavor it in different ways. Experiment with single ground chiles in place of the mixed chili powder; ground coriander along with the cumin; or smoked paprika for smoky depth and an extra rich red color. Which-ever way you choose, keep it simple so the spices shine through. You can also use ground lamb, bison or turkey instead of beef, or vegan meat substitutes such as Beyond Meat. For chili cheese hot dogs, fries or nachos, use this chili and

top with finely shredded cheddar cheese.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 pound ground beef
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika
- 2 tablespoons double-concentrate tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups beef or chicken

- stock (or water)
- 1 can (15 ounces) organic red kidney, pink or pinto beans, undrained
- Shredded sharp cheddar or Colby jack cheese, sour cream, diced avocado or guacamole, diced red onion and thinly sliced scallions, for serving

1. Heat the oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the beef, season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring to break it up, until no longer pink, 4 to 5 minutes. Sprinkle over the chili powder,

oregano, cumin and paprika and cook, stirring, until the spices are toasted in the fat, about 1 minute. Add the tomato paste, and cook, stirring, until lightly caramelized, 1 to 2 minutes.

2. Sprinkle the flour over the beef and cook, stirring, to cook off the raw flavor of the flour, about 1 minute. Pour in the beans, liquid and all, then pour the stock into the can of beans to help loosen any stuck beans and rinse the rest of the liquid out of the can; pour it into the pan. Stir everything to combine, then bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer, and cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened and slightly reduced, about 15 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and season again with salt and pepper.

3. Serve the chili in bowls and top with cheese, a dollop of sour cream, avocado, red onion and scallions.

Variations

- No-Bean Chili: Omit the beans and their liquid and double the beef for a total of 2 pounds.
- Vegan Chili: Substitute 1 pound Beyond Meat for the ground beef and substitute vegetable stock, mushroom broth or water for the beef stock.
- Seasoned Ground Beef for Tacos: Cook the recipe through Step 1, then remove from the heat and season with salt and pepper. Use as a filling for tacos.

Make Ahead

The chili will keep in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

FRYING

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If you're new to deep-frying, start with doughnut holes. The simple batter doesn't risk popping hot oil the way watery vegetables or meat might.

Plus, it doesn't require any dough resting or rolling and gives you the incomparable pleasure of freshly fried hot doughnuts.

DOUGHNUT HOLES

Time: 30 minutes
Yields
Makes about 20

These cakey doughnuts deliver the perfect ratio of crisp outsides to tender insides. The dough doesn't require resting or rolling, so fresh, hot doughnuts can be yours in less than 30 minutes.

- Vegetable oil, for frying
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1/3 cup buttermilk
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled

1. Fill a small saucepan with oil to a depth of 1 inch (about 1½ cups). If you have a deep-fry thermometer, clip it to the side. Heat over medium heat to 350 degrees.

2. While the oil heats, whisk

the flour, baking powder, baking soda, nutmeg, salt and 1 tablespoon sugar in a large bowl. Whisk the buttermilk, egg and butter in a small bowl until well-blended. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients and pour in the wet ingredients. Gently fold until smooth. Place the remaining ½ cup sugar in a medium bowl.

If you don't have a thermometer, test the oil by dropping in a tiny dollop of batter. It should bubble immediately and steadily but not violently. If it's bubbling too hard, lower the heat. If it's not bubbling enough, raise it.

3. Using a small cookie scoop or measuring teaspoon, scoop a heaping teaspoon of dough, then carefully drop it into the hot oil. If using a teaspoon, push out the dough with another small spoon. Repeat to fit a single layer of doughnut holes in the oil without crowding; you can fit 3 to 4 at a time.

4. Fry, turning once to evenly brown, until puffed and golden brown, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to paper towels to drain for a few seconds, then transfer to the bowl of sugar and toss gently to coat while hot so the sugar

sticks to the dough. Transfer to a rack to cool. Repeat with the remaining dough, adjusting the heat to maintain the oil's temperature. Serve warm or room temperature.

Variations

- Powdered Doughnut Holes: Toss the fried doughnut holes in powdered sugar instead of granulated.
- Cinnamon Sugar Doughnut Holes: Stir 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon into the granulated sugar for tossing.
- Glazed Doughnut Holes: Omit the granulated sugar for tossing. Mix 1¼ cups powdered sugar with 2 teaspoons water to form a runny glaze. Dip the fried doughnut holes in the glaze, turning to coat. Let stand on a wire rack until the glaze sets.

Substitutions

If you don't have buttermilk, you can mix 1/4 cup plain yogurt with 2 tablespoons milk to use immediately or stir 1 teaspoon lemon juice or distilled white vinegar into 1/3 cup milk and let sit for 5 minutes.



Photo by Ashley O'Toole

Although the building at 1517-25 Jefferson in La Grande housed several business over the past 114 years, only the name Erickson and Durland has survived in a ghost sign on the wall facing the railroad tracks.

HISTORY

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On their way home from the station they saw, as they got closer to the ranch, that their house was on fire.

“They whipped their horses into a run and reached home in time to save practically everything

on the first floor,” the story reads, but the house which was noted as “one of the most modernly equipped houses in the valley was destroyed.”

The article stressed that the house had “plumbing, electric lights and all modern conveniences” including a telephone which Nellie “grittily used” to call

for help.

After selling out to Lottes in 1931, Benjamin Durand moved to Salem to work as a fruit and vegetable inspector for the government. He and his wife, Nellie, had two sons and one daughter. Benjamin died in Portland in 1957 at the age of 79.

Keep looking up! Enjoy!



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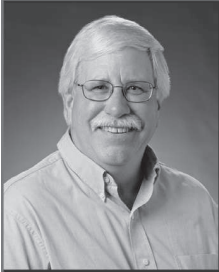
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