



Cincinnati Chili Recipe and Serving Styles

A Different Kind of Chili

Let me tell you about Cincinnati Chili. It is not like your regular bowl of chili. It is thin and rich, like a spiced meat sauce. My grandson once called it spaghetti's best friend. I still laugh at that.

This recipe has a secret. It uses warm spices like cinnamon and cloves. They make the kitchen smell like a cozy holiday. Doesn't that smell amazing? This matters because food should comfort all your senses, not just your taste.

A Little Story from My Kitchen

The first time I made this, my husband was confused. He saw me adding chocolate to the pot. His eyebrows went up so high. But he tried it and loved the deep flavor it gave.

That little bit of chocolate is a fun trick. It does not make the chili taste like candy. It just makes it taste more rounded and special. Have you ever added a surprising ingredient to a family recipe?

How to Build Your Bowl

In Cincinnati, they serve this chili in ways. You start with a plate of spaghetti. Then you ladle the chili right over the top. It is the best base for all the good stuff.

Next, you add your toppings. The classic order is cheese, onions, then beans. The final touch is a handful of oyster crackers. Fun fact: The crackers are for crumbling and scooping up every last bit! Which topping are you most excited to pile on?

Why We Simmer for So Long

This chili cooks for three whole hours. I know that sounds like a long time. But it is the most important step.

That long, gentle simmer lets all the flavors get to know each other. The spices blend and the meat becomes so tender. This matters because good food cannot be rushed. It gives you time to set the table and dream about your first bite.

Make It Your Own

This recipe is a wonderful starting point. But your kitchen is your kingdom. If you do not like a spice, you can use a little less. Love garlic? Add an extra clove.

Cooking is all about making a recipe feel like yours. What is one food you loved as a child that you still enjoy today? For me, it is a warm biscuit with honey. Sharing these foods keeps our stories alive.

Ingredients:

Ingredient	Amount	Notes
lean ground beef	2 pounds	
water	2 cups	plus more as needed
white onion, finely chopped	1 large	
tomato sauce	1 can (15 ounces)	
apple cider vinegar	2 tablespoons	
garlic, minced	2 teaspoons	
Worcestershire sauce	2 teaspoons	
unsweetened chocolate	½ ounce	optional (half of a 1-ounce square)
chili powder	¼ cup (32 g)	
kosher salt	1 teaspoon	
ground cumin	1 teaspoon	
ground cinnamon	1 teaspoon	
ground cayenne pepper	½ teaspoon	
ground allspice	½ teaspoon	
ground cloves	½ teaspoon	



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Cincinnati Chili: A Cozy Kitchen Story

Let me tell you about Cincinnati Chili. It's not like any chili you've had before. My family first tried it on a trip years ago. I still laugh at that memory. We were so confused by spaghetti under our chili! Now, it's a favorite in my kitchen. The secret is all those warm spices. Doesn't that smell amazing? It fills the whole house with coziness.

See also [Sautéing Asparagus and Mushrooms](#)

This recipe takes some time, but it's worth it. The long simmer makes the flavors become best friends. You just have to be patient. Here is how we make it.

- **Step 1:** Start with your beef in a big, heavy pot. Cover it with cold water. Now, bring it all to a boil. You will stir and break up the meat into tiny, tiny pieces. Keep it boiling gently for about half an hour. This is the secret to its unique texture.
- **Step 2:** Next, stir in your chopped onion and tomato sauce. Add the vinegar, garlic, and Worcestershire sauce too. This is where I add the chocolate. It sounds strange, I know! It just makes the chili taste richer and deeper. You won't taste chocolate, I promise.
- **Step 3:** Now for the magic! Sprinkle in all those lovely spices. We have chili powder, cumin, and cinnamon. Don't forget the cayenne, allspice, and cloves. Stir it all until it looks like a beautiful, red sauce. (A hard-learned tip: measure your spices before you start. It saves you from a messy scramble later!).
- **Step 4:** Bring your pot to a boil, then turn the heat way down. Let it simmer gently for a long time. I leave the lid partly off. Stir it now and then so it doesn't stick. If it looks too thick, add a little water. This slow cook is what makes it special.

- **Step 5:** After three hours, give it a little taste. This is the best part. You can add a pinch more salt if you like. The smell will have you dreaming of dinner. **What's your favorite cozy meal to cook on a slow afternoon? Share below!**

Cook Time: 3 hours 30 minutes

Total Time: 3 hours 45 minutes

Yield: 8 servings

Category: Dinner, Main Course

Three Fun Twists on Our Chili

I love recipes you can make your own. This chili is wonderful for that. Sometimes I like to play with the ingredients. It keeps things exciting in the kitchen. Here are three simple twists I've tried and loved.

- **Turkey Swap:** Use ground turkey instead of beef. It makes a lighter version that's just as tasty.
- **Sweet Potato Surprise:** Add diced sweet potatoes with the onions. They get so soft and sweet in the chili.
- **Bean Bonanza:** Stir in a can of your favorite beans at the end. It makes the chili heartier and great for a crowd.

See also [Crab Brunch Casserole](#)

Which one would you try first? Comment below!

Serving Your Masterpiece

Now, the really fun part! In Cincinnati, they serve this chili in special "ways". My favorite is a "Three-Way". You pile hot spaghetti on a plate. Then, you ladle the chili right over the top. Finish it with a mountain of finely shredded cheddar cheese. The heat from the chili makes the

cheese get a little melty. It is pure comfort.

For a “Five-Way”, add diced raw onions and kidney beans too. Don’t forget the oyster crackers for a little crunch on the side. They are the perfect final touch. For a drink, a cold glass of milk is my go-to. It cools your tongue if the spice is just right. Grown-ups might like a dark lager beer with theirs. **Which would you choose tonight?**



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Keeping Your Cincinnati Chili Cozy

This chili freezes beautifully for a future busy day. Let it cool completely first. Then pop it into freezer-safe containers for up to three months.

I once gave a frozen batch to my grandson for his new apartment. He said it was a lifesaver on a cold night. Thaw it overnight in your fridge when you are ready.

Reheat it gently in a pot on the stove. Add a splash of water to loosen it up. This keeps the flavors bright and happy.

Batch cooking like this matters. It means a warm, home-cooked meal is always close by. It turns a stressful evening into a cozy one.

Have you ever tried storing it this way? Share below!

Simple Fixes for Common Chili Hiccups

Is your chili too thick? Do not worry. Just stir in a little more water, a few tablespoons at a time.

I remember when I first made this. I thought I had ruined it. A bit more water fixed everything perfectly.

If the spices taste too sharp, let it simmer longer. Time helps all the flavors get to know each other. This makes the chili taste richer and smoother.

Not getting fine meat crumbles? Start with cold water and your beef. Break it up with a fork as it heats. This small step makes the perfect

texture for your spaghetti.

Fixing small problems builds your cooking confidence. It also makes your food taste exactly how you like it.

Which of these problems have you run into before?

Your Cincinnati Chili Questions, Answered

Q: Can I make this gluten-free?

A: Yes! Just use your favorite gluten-free spaghetti. All the other ingredients are naturally safe.

Q: Can I make it ahead?

A: Absolutely. The flavor gets even better the next day. Just keep it in the fridge.

Q: What if I do not have allspice?

A: A tiny bit more cinnamon and cloves will work. Do not be afraid to try it.

See also [Perfect Pancakes](#)

Q: Can I double the recipe for a crowd?

A: You sure can. Use your biggest pot so it has room to bubble.

Q: Is the chocolate really optional?

A: It is, but it adds a special depth. *Fun fact: The chocolate makes the spices sing without tasting like dessert!*

Which tip will you try first?

Share Your Kitchen Creations

I hope this recipe finds a happy place in your kitchen. It holds so many good memories for me.

I would love to see your version of this cozy meal. Your table and your way of cooking are special.

Have you tried this recipe? Tag us on Pinterest!

Happy cooking!

—Elowen Thorn.

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Author: Elowen Thorn



Cooking Method: [Stovetop](#)



Cuisine: [American](#)



Courses: [Lunch](#) [Main](#) [Dinner](#)



Difficulty: **Beginner**



Prep time: **15 minutes**



Cook time:**3 hours 40 minutes**

Rest time:



Total time:**3 hours 55 minutes**



Servings: **8 servings**



Calories: **155 kcal**

Best Season: **Summer**

Description

A classic, uniquely spiced meat sauce served over spaghetti with

traditional toppings like cheese, onions, and beans.

Ingredients

- ☐ 2 pounds lean ground beef
- ☐ 2 cups water, plus more as needed
- ☐ 1 large white onion, finely chopped
- ☐ 1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce
- ☐ 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- ☐ 2 teaspoons garlic, minced
- ☐ 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- ☐ ½ ounce (half of a 1-ounce square) unsweetened chocolate, optional
- ☐ ¼ cup (32 g) chili powder
- ☐ 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ☐ 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ☐ 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ☐ ½ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- ☐ ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- ☐ ½ teaspoon ground cloves

For Serving

- ☐ spaghetti, cooked al dente
- ☐ sharp cheddar cheese, finely shredded
- ☐ white onions, diced
- ☐ kidney beans, cooked
- ☐ oyster crackers

Instructions

1. Place the ground beef in a large heavy-bottom pot or Dutch oven. Pour about 2 cups of cold water over the beef, ensuring it is fully submerged. Bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring frequently and breaking up the beef with a fork into very fine crumbles. Continue boiling gently until the beef is cooked through, about 30 minutes.
2. Add the chopped onions, tomato sauce, apple cider vinegar, garlic, Worcestershire sauce, and chocolate (if using) to the pot with the cooked beef. Stir well to combine.
3. Add the chili powder, salt, cumin, cinnamon, cayenne pepper, allspice, and cloves. Stir until the spices are evenly distributed.
4. Bring the mixture to a boil. Then, reduce the heat to low to maintain a gentle simmer. Cover the pot partially with a lid, leaving a small gap to allow steam to escape. Cook the chili for 3 hours, stirring occasionally. Add water, a few tablespoons at a time, if the chili becomes too thick or begins to stick to the bottom of the pot.
5. Once the chili has cooked for 3 hours, taste and adjust seasonings as needed.
6. Serve hot over cooked spaghetti. Add optional garnishes like shredded cheese, diced onions, cooked kidney beans, and oyster crackers.

Notes

The unique method of boiling the beef in water creates the signature fine texture of Cincinnati chili. For authentic serving styles, try a 'Two-Way' (chili on spaghetti), 'Three-Way' (add cheese), 'Four-Way' (add onions or beans), or 'Five-Way' (add both onions and beans).

Keywords:Cincinnati Chili, Chili, Spaghetti, Comfort Food, American