

U The Lexingtonienne U

SUPER-EASY CHILI

- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, left whole but slightly crushed
- 2 pounds lean ground beef
- 6 tsp ground cumin, divided
- 6 tsp chili powder, divided
- 1 6-oz can tomato paste
- 2 cans chili beans, undrained
- 1 14.5-oz can crushed tomatoes
- 1 large can diced or whole peeled tomatoes
- Pinch of red pepper flakes or a few dashes of hot sauce (optional)
- Salt & pepper to taste

Set some of the chopped onion aside for a chili topping for serving.

In a large, heavy pot, saute the rest of the onions over medium-high heat until softened. Add garlic and cook for a few minutes more.

Turn heat to high, add ground beef and cook until browned. (If you are using fattier ground beef -- more than 10% fat -- you will want to drain off the fat after the meat is browned. But with something very lean, you should be fine.) Add 2 tsp each cumin and chili powder. Add tomato paste and mix in thoroughly, cooking for a few minutes. Add chili beans and 2 more tsp each cumin and chili powder. Stir in crushed tomatoes and diced or whole peeled tomatoes. (If you're using whole, you'll want to smash the tomatoes against the side of the pot with a wooden spoon.)

Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Taste for seasoning. Add 2 more tsp (or more) each cumin and chili powder, if desired. Salt & pepper to taste. Add red pepper flakes or hot sauce if desired.

Simmer over low heat, partially covered, stirring occasionally, for an hour or longer. Fish out the 2 whole cloves of garlic before serving.



As variations, you could:

- add chopped green bell pepper, pasilla pepper, or jalapeno when you saute the onion.
- add a half cup (or more, if no one's looking) Maker's Mark after browning the beef
- throw in a tiny pinch of cinnamon, nutmeg, and/or ground cloves at any point if desired (although that does start to encroach on Cincinnati-style chili territory, which we will venture into in another post).
- You may also want to keep some small cans of tomato juice on hand, in case you think your chili needs more liquid (although I like mine to be pretty thick).

Serve with an assortment of toppings, such as:

- shredded cheddar or jack cheese
- sour cream
- chopped onions
- chopped green onions
- jarred jalapeno slices
- dark chocolate chips

And you may want to offer any of the following on the side:

- soup crackers
- tortilla chips (Doritos, although proletarian, are really, really good with chili)
- cornbread
- garlic bread

Remember that chili is even better the next day. It also freezes extremely well!

