

# Gorgeous Chili (the short way)

Serves 6—8

Chili means many different things depending on where you are. At its most basic, you can expect meat cooked until tender in some sort of spiced, likely tomato-y sauce. This version uses ground beef (or turkey or pork), is heavy on the tomato, is well spiced but will not necessarily light your mouth on fire, and a good dose of canned bean (yes, there are beans in this chili). While it cooks in less than half the time as The Long Version, for some, even an hour is too long to wait for chili. In that case, you can find a different recipe (not by me), but I think chili, almost by definition, deserves a bit of time in the pot (even if it is The Short Version). I think of The Short Version as something you might spoon over a bowl of rice or a hot dog, maybe a split bag of Frito's. The Long Version I think of as something for a dinner party, to set out with tiny bowls of toppings. Both are great for eating out of a mug as a midday snack.

## Ingredients

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**2 tablespoons neutral or olive oil**  
**3 pounds ground beef, pork or turkey**  
**Kosher salt, freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 medium yellow onions, finely chopped**  
**8–10 cloves garlic, finely chopped or thinly sliced**  
**¾ cup tomato paste (from one 6 oz. can)**  
**1 ½ tablespoons cumin seed or 2 teaspoons ground cumin**  
**2 teaspoons smoked paprika**  
**1 ½ teaspoons hot paprika (or smoked or sweet, plus more crushed red pepper flakes)**  
**1 ½ teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes, plus more**  
**2 12-ounce cans beer (something light, like a lager)\***  
**1 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes (or whole tomatoes, well crushed)**  
**3 or 4 15-ounce cans beans, drained and rinsed (use a mix of white and kidney if you can)**  
**Toppings, you must (thinly sliced scallion, fresh or pickled red onion, shredded cheddar cheese, full-fat sour cream, chopped cilantro, thinly sliced fresh or pickled jalapeños, crumbled Fritos, lime wedges, etc).**

## Instructions

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1. Heat oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Add the beef in one layer (don't worry too much about crowding the pan), and cook, stirring and breaking up with a wooden spoon occasionally, until deeply browned, 15-18 minutes total (I do not drain the fat here, but you can).
  2. Add onions and garlic to the pot, season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally until they're softened and translucent, 3–5 minutes. Add tomato paste and cook until it turns brick red, caramelizing a bit on the bottom of the pot, 2–3 minutes. Add cumin, paprika and chili flake and cook, stirring constantly for a minute or so to toast and bloom the spices.
  3. Add beer, using a wooden spoon to scrape up the caramelized bits at the bottom of the pot, followed by crushed tomatoes, beans and 4 cups of water. Season with salt and pepper and bring to a strong simmer.
  4. Reduce the heat to medium-low (everything should be at a gentle simmer) and cook uncovered, stirring occasionally, until the pot has thickened into a beautiful chili, 45 minutes on the low end (I say that because you're in a rush, but know that the longer you simmer, the better it will taste, so go for an 60–90 minutes if you can bear it).
  5. Remove from heat, and season again once more with salt, pepper and maybe crushed red pepper flakes if you like.

\*If not using beer, use water

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6. To serve, set out all the toppings you want. Use every small bowl and precious tiny plate to display your shredded cheese and bowls of sour cream. Your scallions and pickled things. Do not top anyone's bowl for them, but encourage them to go wild. There are always more toppings where those came from, you say.

**DO AHEAD:** Like all great soups and stews, this chili gets better with age. It can be made 5 days ahead, stored in the fridge, or frozen 3 months ahead, stored in the freezer.