

- Prep Time: 15 Minutes
 - Cook Time: 45 Minutes
 - Total Time: 1 Hour
 - Yield: 8-10 Servings
 - Category: Main Course / Comfort Food
 - Cuisine: American
 - Method: Stovetop / Simmering
 - Intensity Level: Easy (Beginner Friendly)
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Ingredients

To achieve the perfect balance of savory, sweet, and tangy, quality ingredients matter, but this recipe is very forgiving.

The Base:

- 2 lbs (900g) Ground Beef: I recommend 85/15 or 80/20 lean-to-fat ratio. You need a little fat for flavor.
- 1 Large Yellow Onion: Diced.
- 4 cloves Garlic: Minced.
- 2 tbsp Olive Oil: For sautéing.

The Sauce:

- 2 (15 oz) cans Tomato Sauce: The smooth base.
- 2 (14.5 oz) cans Diced Tomatoes: For texture. (Fire-roasted is a great upgrade).

- 1 (6 oz) can Tomato Paste: For deep, rich tomato flavor.
- 2 cups Beef Broth: To cook the pasta and add depth.
- 2 tbsp Worcestershire Sauce: For umami.
- 1 tbsp Soy Sauce: (My secret ingredient for that “slow-cooked” flavor).
- 1 tbsp Granulated Sugar: To cut the acidity of the tomatoes.
- 1 tbsp Italian Seasoning: Dried blend.
- 1 tsp Smoked Paprika: For a subtle smokiness.
- 1/2 tsp Crushed Red Pepper Flakes: Optional, for heat.
- Salt and Black Pepper: To taste.

The Pasta & Finish:

- 2 cups Elbow Macaroni: Uncooked. (You can also use shells or rotini).
- 1 cup Sharp Cheddar Cheese: Shredded (for topping).

- Fresh Parsley: Chopped (for garnish).
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Instructions

Step 1: The Sauté (Intensity: Low)

Heat your olive oil in a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed stockpot over medium-high heat. Once the oil is shimmering, add the diced onion. Sauté for 3–4 minutes until the onion becomes translucent and soft. Add the minced garlic and cook for 1 minute until fragrant, being careful not to burn it.

Step 2: Brown the Beef (Intensity: Medium)

Add the ground beef to the pot. Break it apart with a wooden spoon or potato masher. Cook for 5–7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the meat is fully browned. If there is a lot of excess grease, you can drain it, but leaving a little bit adds flavor. Season the meat with salt and pepper.

Step 3: Build the Flavor (Intensity: Low)

Add the tomato paste to the meat mixture. Stir it into the beef and onions and cook for 2 minutes. This step is crucial; toasting the tomato paste caramelizes the sugars and removes the “tinny” taste, creating a deeper flavor profile. Stir in the Worcestershire sauce and soy sauce.

Step 4: The Simmer (Intensity: Low)

Pour in the tomato sauce, diced tomatoes (with their juices), and beef broth. Add the Italian seasoning, smoked paprika, sugar, and red pepper flakes (if using). Stir everything together until well combined.

Bring the mixture to a boil, then immediately reduce the heat to low. Cover the pot with a lid and let it simmer for 15 minutes. This allows the flavors to meld.

Step 5: The Pasta Cook (Intensity: Medium)

Stir in the uncooked elbow macaroni. (Note: Adding the pasta raw allows it to absorb the flavorful tomato broth, making the dish heartier). Turn the heat up to medium-low and bring the mixture back to a gentle simmer. Cover and cook for 15–20 minutes, or until the pasta is tender (al dente). Stir every 5 minutes to prevent the pasta from sticking to the bottom of the pot. If the mixture looks too thick before the pasta is done, add a splash of water or broth.

Step 6: The Finish (Intensity: Low)

Once the pasta is tender, taste the goulash and adjust the seasoning. Add more salt, pepper, or a pinch of sugar if needed. If you like a cheesier casserole style, sprinkle the shredded cheddar cheese over the top now, cover the pot, and let it sit for 2–3 minutes until the cheese melts.

Step 7: Serve

Ladle the goulash into bowls. Garnish with fresh chopped parsley and extra cheese if desired. Serve with crusty bread for dipping.

Recipe Notes & Tips

- The “Chop Suey” Variation: If you are from New England, you might call this American Chop Suey. The only difference is often the ratio of meat to pasta and the specific spices. This recipe sits right in the middle of the two traditions.

- **Pasta Swaps:** If you don't have elbow macaroni, you can use rotini, penne, or shells. However, avoid very thin pasta like spaghetti; it will turn to mush.
 - **Slow Cooker Instructions:** Brown the beef and onions in a skillet first. Transfer to a slow cooker with all other ingredients *except* the pasta. Cook on Low for 4 hours. Add the uncooked pasta 30 minutes before serving and turn the heat to High.
 - **Leftovers:** This recipe is famous for tasting better the next day. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.
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Nutrition

Disclaimer: The following nutritional information is an estimate based on standard ingredients and a yield of 8 servings. Actual values may vary based on specific brands and ingredient swaps.

- **Serving Size:** 1 large bowl (approx. 1.5 cups)
- **Calories:** 420
- **Total Fat:** 18g
- **Saturated Fat:** 7g
- **Trans Fat:** 0.5g

- Cholesterol: 75mg
- Sodium: 850mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 36g
- Dietary Fiber: 5g
- Sugars: 9g
- Protein: 26g
- Vitamin D: 0mcg
- Calcium: 150mg
- Iron: 4mg
- Potassium: 700mg