

Prep Time: 15 minutes | Cook Time: 12 minutes | Total Time: 27 minutes

Difficulty: Easy | Intensity: Low-Moderate

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Introduction

If you love the iconic flavors of a Big Mac but want something higher in protein, lower in refined carbs, and just as satisfying, this Big Mac Cheeseburger Protein Bowl is exactly what you need. It takes everything you crave about the classic double-decker cheeseburger — the juicy seasoned beef, the melted American cheese, the tangy pickles, the crisp shredded

lettuce, and that unmistakable creamy Thousand Island-style “Mac Sauce” — and serves it all over a bowl instead of a bun.

This recipe is perfect for meal prep, macro-friendly diets, and anyone who wants a fast, flavorful, high-protein dinner on the table in under 30 minutes. Each bowl delivers a massive protein hit while keeping carbs moderate and fats balanced, making it an excellent option for bodybuilders, fitness enthusiasts, or anyone simply trying to eat a bit healthier without giving up the foods they love.

Ingredients

For the Beef

- 1 lb (450 g) lean ground beef (90/10 or 93/7)
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce (optional, for depth)

For the Bowls

- 4 cups shredded iceberg lettuce (or romaine)
- 2 cups cooked white rice, cauliflower rice, or quinoa (your choice)
- 4 slices American cheese (or ½ cup shredded cheddar)
- ¼ cup diced white onion
- ¼ cup dill pickles, sliced or chopped
- ½ cup cherry tomatoes, halved (optional)
- 2 tablespoons sesame seeds (for garnish)

For the Big Mac Sauce (Copycat)

- ½ cup mayonnaise (or Greek yogurt for a lighter version)
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon yellow mustard

- 1 tablespoon sweet pickle relish
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder

Optional Toppings

- Crumbled bacon
 - Avocado slices
 - Shredded cheddar
 - Hot sauce or sliced jalapeños
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Equipment Needed

- Large skillet or cast-iron pan
 - Mixing bowl (for sauce)
 - Measuring spoons and cups
 - Cutting board and knife
 - Meal prep containers (if storing)
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Instructions

Step 1: Make the Big Mac Sauce (5 minutes | Intensity: Low)

In a small mixing bowl, combine the mayonnaise, ketchup, yellow mustard, sweet pickle relish, white vinegar, paprika, onion powder, and garlic powder. Whisk until smooth and creamy. Taste and adjust — add more relish for tang, more ketchup for sweetness, or a pinch of salt if needed. Cover and refrigerate while you prepare the rest of the bowl. This sauce keeps for up to 5 days in the fridge.

Step 2: Cook the Beef (8-10 minutes | Intensity: Moderate)

Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the ground beef and break it apart with a wooden spoon or spatula. Cook for 5-6 minutes, stirring occasionally, until browned and

mostly cooked through. Drain excess fat if necessary.

Sprinkle in the onion powder, garlic powder, smoked paprika, black pepper, and salt. Add the Worcestershire sauce if using. Stir well and continue cooking for another 3–4 minutes until the beef is fully cooked and coated in the seasoning. Reduce heat to low.

Step 3: Melt the Cheese (1-2 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Lay the American cheese slices over the cooked beef in the skillet. Cover with a lid and let the cheese melt for 1–2 minutes. Alternatively, stir shredded cheese directly into the beef until melted and gooey.

Step 4: Build the Base (2 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Divide the cooked rice (or cauliflower rice/quinoa) between two bowls. This forms the hearty base of your protein bowl. If meal prepping, portion into containers now.

Step 5: Assemble the Bowl (3 minutes | Intensity: Low)

Top each rice base with:

- A generous handful of shredded lettuce
- Half the cheesy seasoned beef
- Diced white onion
- Dill pickles
- Cherry tomatoes (if using)

- A drizzle of Big Mac sauce (about 2 tablespoons per bowl)
- A sprinkle of sesame seeds

Step 6: Finish and Serve (1 minute | Intensity: Low)

Add any optional toppings you like — bacon, avocado, extra cheese, or hot sauce. Serve immediately while warm, or seal in containers for meal prep.

Timing Overview

Stage	Time	Intensity
Sauce prep	5 min	Low
Beef cooking	8-10 min	Moderate
Cheese melting	1-2 min	Low
Base & assembly	5 min	Low
Total	~27 min	Low-Moderate

Chef Tips

1. Use 93/7 ground beef if you're watching calories — it still tastes great with all the seasoning and sauce.
2. Cauliflower rice cuts carbs dramatically and works beautifully here.

3. Greek yogurt swap in the sauce reduces fat and adds protein without losing creaminess.
4. Double the batch for easy weekday lunches — it stores beautifully for 4 days.
5. Don't skip the pickles. They're the signature tang that makes it taste like a Big Mac.
6. Toast the sesame seeds in a dry pan for 1 minute to boost their nutty flavor.

Nutrition Information (Per Serving)

Based on 2 servings, using 90/10 ground beef, white rice, and full-fat mayo.

Nutrient		Amount
Calories		~620 kcal
Protein		~42 g
Carbohydrates		~38 g
Fat		~32 g
Saturated Fat		~11 g
Fiber		~4 g
Sugar		~8 g
Sodium		~980 mg
Cholesterol		~115 mg

Lighter Version (Greek yogurt + cauliflower rice + 93/7 beef):

	Nutrient	Amount
Calories		~430 kcal
Protein		~45 g
Carbohydrates		~14 g
Fat		~19 g
Fiber		~5 g