- Prep Time: 20 minutes
- Cook Time: 1 hour 30 minutes
- Total Time: 1 hour 50 minutes
- Skill Level: Easy to Intermediate
- Servings: 6–8
- Cuisine: American / Tex-Mex
- Course: Main Dish

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Ingredients

For the Chili

- 2 lbs (900 g) ground beef (80/20 blend recommended)
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 (15 oz / 425 g) cans kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15 oz / 425 g) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 (28 oz / 800 g) cans crushed tomatoes

- 1 (6 oz / 170 g) can tomato paste
- 2 cups (480 ml) beef broth
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Spices & Seasonings

- 3 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper (adjust to taste)
- 1 teaspoon salt (plus more to taste)
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar (optional, to balance acidity)

- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder (optional, for depth)

Optional Toppings

- Shredded cheddar cheese
- Sour cream
- Sliced green onions
- Fresh cilantro
- Diced avocado
- Crushed tortilla chips or cornbread on the side

Equipment Needed

- Large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot (at least 6 quarts)
- Wooden spoon or spatula

- Measuring spoons and cups
- Can opener
- Cutting board and chef’s knife
- Ladle for serving

Step-by-Step Instructions

Phase 1: Preparation (20 minutes | Low Intensity)

1. Prep the vegetables. Dice the onion and bell peppers into uniform ½-inch pieces. Mince the garlic finely. Set aside in separate bowls.
2. Drain and rinse the beans. Open both cans of kidney beans and the can of black beans, pour into a colander, and rinse under cold water. Set aside.
3. Measure the spices. Combine chili powder, cumin, smoked paprika, oregano, cayenne, salt, and black pepper in a small bowl. This ensures even seasoning distribution later.
4. Open the canned goods. Open the crushed tomatoes and tomato paste, and measure the beef broth.

Phase 2: Brown the Beef (10–12 minutes | Medium-High Intensity)

5. Heat the pot. Place your Dutch oven over medium-high heat and add 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Allow it to heat for 1–2 minutes until shimmering.

6. Brown the beef. Add the ground beef in a single layer. Let it sit undisturbed for 3–4 minutes to develop a brown crust, then break it apart with a wooden spoon. Continue cooking for 5–6 minutes, stirring occasionally, until no pink remains.

7. Drain excess fat. Tilt the pot and spoon off excess fat, leaving about 1 tablespoon for flavor. (If using lean beef, you may skip this step.)

Phase 3: Sauté the Aromatics (5–6 minutes | Medium Intensity)

8. Add the vegetables. Add the diced onion and bell peppers to the pot. Cook over medium heat for 4–5 minutes, stirring frequently, until softened and the onion turns translucent.

9. Add the garlic. Stir in the minced garlic and cook for 30–60 seconds until fragrant. Be careful not to burn it.

10. Bloom the spices. Add the bowl of mixed spices directly to the pot. Stir constantly for 1 minute over medium heat — this “blooms” the spices and releases their essential oils, deepening the flavor.

Phase 4: Build the Chili (5 minutes | Low-Medium Intensity)

11. Add tomato paste. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for 1–2 minutes, stirring to coat the meat and vegetables. This caramelizes the paste slightly and removes its raw taste.

12. Add liquids and beans. Pour in the crushed tomatoes and beef broth. Stir well, scraping the bottom of the pot to loosen any browned bits (fond). Add the drained beans and stir to combine.

13. Add optional enhancers. If using, stir in the brown sugar and cocoa powder now. They won't make the chili sweet — they simply round out the acidity and add richness.

Phase 5: Simmer (60–75 minutes | Low Intensity)

14. Bring to a boil. Increase heat to medium-high and bring the chili to a gentle boil, about 5 minutes.

15. Reduce and simmer. Reduce heat to low, cover partially with a lid (leave a small gap for steam to escape), and simmer for 60–75 minutes. Stir every 15–20 minutes to prevent sticking and to help the flavors meld. The chili is ready when it has thickened and the flavors are fully integrated.

16. Taste and adjust. After 45 minutes, taste the chili. Add salt, cayenne, or a pinch of sugar as needed. If it's too thick, add a splash of beef broth; if too thin, simmer uncovered for the final 15 minutes.

Phase 6: Rest and Serve (10 minutes | No Heat)

17. Rest the chili. Remove from heat and let it rest, covered, for 10 minutes. This allows the flavors to settle and the chili to thicken slightly.

18. Serve. Ladle into bowls and top with your choice of shredded cheese, sour cream, green onions, cilantro, or avocado. Serve with cornbread or tortilla chips.

Time & Intensity Summary Table

Phase	Time	Heat Intensity
Preparation	20 min	Low
Brown the beef	10–12 min	Medium-High
Sauté aromatics	5–6 min	Medium
Build the chili	5 min	Low-Medium
Simmer	60–75 min	Low
Rest & serve	10 min	None

Total Active Time: ~40 minutes | Total Cook Time: ~1 hour 30 minutes

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Tips for Success

- Use 80/20 ground beef for the best balance of flavor and texture. Leaner beef works but produces less rich results.

- Don’t skip blooming the spices — it’s the single biggest flavor upgrade in this recipe.
- Chili tastes even better the next day. Make it a day ahead and refrigerate overnight for maximum flavor development.
- Freezer-friendly: Cool completely, portion into freezer-safe containers, and freeze for up to 3 months.
- Adjust heat level by increasing or decreasing cayenne and adding fresh jalapeños during the sauté phase.

Nutrition Information (Per Serving, Based on 8 Servings)

Values are estimates and will vary based on exact ingredients and portion sizes.

Nutrient	Amount
Calories	~420 kcal
Total Fat	19 g
Saturated Fat	7 g
Cholesterol	75 mg
Sodium	780 mg
Total Carbohydrates	32 g
Dietary Fiber	9 g
Total Sugars	8 g
Protein	30 g
Vitamin C	45% DV

Nutrient	Amount
Iron	30% DV
Calcium	8% DV