

- Prep Time: 10 minutes
- Cook Time: 20 minutes
- Total Time: 30 minutes
- Cooking Intensity Level: Low to Medium (Beginner-Friendly)
- Yield: 6 full servings

Cooking Phase	Intensity / Heat Level	Duration	Purpose
Boiling Pasta	High Heat	8-10 mins	Cook shells to perfect <i>al dente</i>
Searing Beef & Aromatics	Medium-High Heat	6-8 mins	Brown meat & release garlic-onion flavor
Simmering Sauce	Medium-Low Heat	5 mins	Melding broth, tomato, & spices
Emulsifying & Melting	Low Heat (Off Stovetop)	2-3 mins	Stir in cream & cheese without curdling

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Ingredients

For the Pasta & Meat:

- 12 oz (340g) Medium Pasta Shells (*Conchiglie*)
- 1 lb (450g) Lean Ground Beef (85/15 or 90/10 blend)
- 1 tbsp Olive Oil or unsalted butter
- 1 medium Yellow Onion, finely diced
- 4 cloves Garlic, minced

For the Tomato-Cream Base:

- 2 tbsp Tomato Paste
- 1 can (15 oz / 400g) Tomato Sauce (or passata)
- 2 cups Low-Sodium Beef Broth

- 1 tsp Italian Seasoning (marjoram, thyme, rosemary, savory, sage, oregano)
- 1/2 tsp Smoked Paprika
- 1/2 tsp Onion Powder
- Salt and Freshly Cracked Black Pepper, to taste

For the Cheese & Finishing Touches:

- 1/2 cup Heavy Cream (or full-fat coconut milk / Greek yogurt alternative)
- 1 cup Sharp Cheddar Cheese, freshly shredded
- 1/2 cup Parmesan Cheese, freshly grated
- 2 tbsp Fresh Parsley, finely chopped for garnish

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1: Cook the Pasta Shells

1. Bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a rolling boil over High Heat.

2. Add the 12 oz of medium pasta shells. Stir immediately to prevent sticking.
3. Cook according to package instructions until *al dente* (usually 8 to 9 minutes). *Tip: The shells will continue to absorb sauce later, so do not overcook them here.*
4. Reserve 1/2 cup of pasta water before draining. Drain the pasta and set aside.

Step 2: Sear the Beef & Soften Aromatics

1. Heat 1 tbsp of olive oil in a large deep skillet or Dutch oven over Medium-High Heat.
2. Add the finely diced yellow onion and ground beef. Break up the beef with a wooden spoon as it cooks.
3. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes until the beef is browned and cooked through with no pink remaining, and onions are soft.
4. Drain any excess grease from the pan, leaving about 1 tablespoon for flavor.
5. Reduce heat to Medium Heat. Stir in the 4 cloves of minced garlic and 2 tbsp of tomato paste. Cook for 1 to 2 minutes until fragrant and the tomato paste turns a deep brick-red color.

Step 3: Build the Sauce Base

1. Lower the burner to Medium-Low Heat.
2. Pour in 2 cups of low-sodium beef broth and 1 can of tomato sauce.
3. Add the Italian seasoning, smoked paprika, onion powder, salt, and black pepper.
4. Stir well, scraping up any browned bits stuck to the bottom of the pan (deglazing brings immense flavor).
5. Let the mixture simmer gently for 5 minutes to thicken slightly and allow the flavors to blend together seamlessly.

Step 4: Combine, Melt, and Serve

1. Turn the burner down to Low Heat (or remove from heat completely).
2. Pour in 1/2 cup of heavy cream and stir until the sauce turns a silky light-orange color.
3. Gradually stir in 1 cup of freshly shredded sharp cheddar cheese and 1/2 cup of grated parmesan cheese until completely melted and smooth.
4. Fold in the cooked pasta shells, stirring until every shell is generously coated in sauce. If the sauce feels too thick, splash in a few tablespoons of the reserved warm pasta water.

5. Taste and adjust salt or pepper as desired. Garnish with chopped fresh parsley and serve warm.

Pro Tips for Website Success

- **Grate Your Own Cheese:** Pre-shredded bagged cheese contains anti-caking cellulose agent that stops it from melting smoothly into pasta sauces. Freshly grated cheddar gives that glossy finish.
- **Why Shells Work Best:** The inner pocket of small and medium shell pasta acts like tiny spoons holding onto ground beef and rich sauce in every bite.
- **Storage & Reheating:** Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. Reheat gently on the stovetop over low heat with a splash of milk or broth to loosen the cream sauce.

Complete Nutritional Information

Calculated per serving based on 6 equal servings.

Nutritional Metric	Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value (DV)*
Calories	485 kcal	—
Total Fat	22 g	28%
<i>Saturated Fat</i>	<i>10.5 g</i>	53%
<i>Trans Fat</i>	<i>0.5 g</i>	—
Cholesterol	85 mg	28%
Sodium	680 mg	30%
Total Carbohydrates	44 g	16%

Nutritional Metric	Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value (DV)*
<i>Dietary Fiber</i>	<i>3 g</i>	11%
<i>Total Sugars</i>	<i>4.5 g</i>	—
Protein	28 g	56%
Vitamin D	0.4 mcg	2%
Calcium	220 mg	17%
Iron	3.8 mg	21%
Potassium	580 mg	12%