Prep Time: 15 minutes
Cook Time: 6 hours (Low) or 3 hours (High)
Total Time: 6 hours 15 minutes
Servings: 8 (about 1.5 cups each)

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Introduction

If you are looking for a soup that eats like a meal, look no further than Crockpot Cowboy Soup. This hearty, stick-to-your-ribs dish is packed with ground beef, smoky bacon, tender potatoes, beans, corn, and a rich, tomato-based broth seasoned with a warm blend of Tex-Mex spices. It is the kind of soup that warms you from the inside out on a cold winter evening and satisfies even the biggest appetites at the table.

The beauty of this recipe lies in its simplicity. Everything goes into the slow cooker, and the magic happens while you go about your day. The flavors meld together beautifully over several hours, resulting in a deeply savory, slightly smoky, and perfectly seasoned soup that tastes like it simmered all day—because it did. Whether you are feeding a hungry family, meal-prepping for the week, or hosting a casual gathering, this Cowboy Soup is a guaranteed

crowd-pleaser that will have everyone coming back for seconds.

Ingredients

For the Soup:

- 1 lb lean ground beef
- 6 slices bacon, chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 medium green bell pepper, diced
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced
- 3 medium Russet potatoes, peeled and cubed (about 1-inch pieces)
- 1 (15 oz) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (15 oz) can tomato sauce
- 1 (15 oz) can kidney beans, drained and rinsed

- 1 (15 oz) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15 oz) can corn, drained (or 1 ½ cups frozen corn)
- 6 cups low-sodium beef broth
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon salt (adjust to taste)
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

For Garnish:

- Shredded cheddar cheese
- Sour cream or Greek yogurt
- Chopped fresh cilantro or green onions
- Crushed tortilla chips or cornbread for serving

Equipment

- 6-quart (or larger) slow cooker
- Large skillet
- Wooden spoon or spatula
- Chef’s knife and cutting board
- Can opener
- Measuring cups and spoons

Instructions

Phase 1: Prep & Browning (Time: 15 Minutes | Intensity: Medium-High)

1. Prep the Vegetables: Wash and chop all vegetables first. Dice the onion and green bell pepper, mince the garlic, peel and slice the carrots, and peel and cube the potatoes into about 1-inch pieces.

2. Cook the Bacon: Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Add the chopped bacon and cook for 5-7 minutes until crispy. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the bacon to a paper towel-lined plate, reserving about 1 tablespoon of bacon grease in the skillet.

3. Brown the Beef: Increase the heat to medium-high. Add the ground beef to the skillet with the bacon grease and cook, breaking it apart with a wooden spoon, until fully browned (about 6-8 minutes). Drain any excess grease.

4. Sauté Aromatics: Add the diced onion, minced garlic, and green bell pepper to the skillet with the beef. Cook for 3-4 minutes until the vegetables are softened and fragrant. This step builds a deeper, richer flavor base.

Phase 2: Loading the Slow Cooker (Time: 5 Minutes | Intensity: Low)

1. Transfer the Meat Mixture: Carefully transfer the beef, bacon, onion, garlic, and bell

pepper mixture to the bottom of the slow cooker.

2. Add the Vegetables: Add the sliced carrots and cubed potatoes on top of the meat mixture.

3. Add the Cans: Pour in the diced tomatoes, tomato sauce, kidney beans, black beans, and corn.

4. Add the Broth & Seasonings: Pour in the beef broth and Worcestershire sauce. Add the chili powder, smoked paprika, dried oregano, ground cumin, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Tuck the bay leaf into the liquid.

5. Stir Gently: Give everything a gentle stir to combine. Do not overfill the pot—the soup will expand slightly as it cooks.

Phase 3: The Slow Cook (Time: 6 Hours Low / 3 Hours High | Intensity: Low)

1. Set & Forget: Cover the slow cooker with the lid. Cook on LOW for 6 to 7 hours or on HIGH for 3 to 4 hours.

2. Keep the Lid On: Resist the urge to open the lid during cooking. Each time you open it, you release heat and moisture, which increases the cooking time.

3. Check Doneness: The soup is ready when the potatoes and carrots are fork-tender and the flavors have melded together beautifully.

Phase 4: Finishing Touches (Time: 5 Minutes | Intensity: Low)

1. Remove Bay Leaf: Carefully remove and discard the bay leaf.

2. Taste & Adjust: Taste the soup and adjust the salt, pepper, and spices to your liking. If you prefer a spicier kick, add a pinch of cayenne pepper or a dash of hot sauce.

3. Thicken (If Desired): If the soup is too thin, mash a few of the potato cubes against the side of the pot to thicken it naturally. Alternatively, whisk 1 tablespoon of cornstarch with 2 tablespoons of cold water and stir it into the soup, cooking on HIGH for 10 minutes until thickened.

4. Garnish & Serve: Ladle into bowls and top with shredded cheddar cheese, a dollop of sour cream, and fresh chopped cilantro or green onions.

Flavor Variations

- Spicy Cowboy: Add a diced jalapeño with the bell pepper and ¼ teaspoon of cayenne pepper for a soup with a serious kick.

- Beef & Barley: Substitute the potatoes with ½ cup of pearl barley. You may need to add an extra cup of beef broth, as barley absorbs a lot of liquid.

- Vegetarian Cowboy: Omit the ground beef and bacon. Use vegetable broth and add an

extra can of beans (such as pinto or cannellini) for protein.

- Smoky BBQ: Add 2 tablespoons of barbecue sauce and ½ teaspoon of liquid smoke for a smoky, sweet-savory twist.

- Low Carb: Skip the potatoes and corn entirely. Increase the carrots slightly and add extra green beans or diced zucchini.

Nutrition

Note: Nutritional information is an estimate based on standard ingredients and does not include garnishes or serving accompaniments.

Serving Size: 1.5 cups
Calories: 340
Total Fat: 11g
Saturated Fat: 4g
Cholesterol: 45mg
Sodium: 850mg
Total Carbohydrates: 38g
Dietary Fiber: 9g
Sugars: 9g
Protein: 22g