Prep Time: 15 minutes | Cook Time: 45 minutes | Total Time: 60 minutes
Yield: 8 servings (about 3 quarts) | Intensity Level: Easy

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Introduction

Hamburger Soup is the ultimate no-fuss, hearty family meal — a rich, savory broth loaded with browned ground beef, tender potatoes, sweet carrots, green beans, and tomatoes. It’s the kind of soup that tastes like it simmered all day, yet comes together in about an hour

with pantry staples and a single pot. Think of it as a cross between vegetable beef soup and a deconstructed cheeseburger, minus the bun: deeply beefy, lightly tomatoey, and packed with vegetables that make it a complete meal in a bowl. It’s budget-friendly, freezer-friendly, and endlessly adaptable — swap in whatever vegetables you have on hand, add pasta or barley, or spice it up with a dash of hot sauce. This is comfort food at its most practical: a soup that feeds a crowd, reheats beautifully, and gets even better the next day. Serve it with crusty bread or cornbread, and you’ve got dinner sorted for the whole week.

Ingredients

For the Soup

- 1½ lb (680 g) lean ground beef (85/15 recommended)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, diced (about 1½ cups)
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and sliced into ¼-inch rounds (about 1½ cups)
- 3 celery stalks, diced (about 1 cup)
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp tomato paste

- 1 can (14.5 oz / 410 g) diced tomatoes, with juices
- 1 can (8 oz / 225 g) tomato sauce
- 8 cups (1.9 L) low-sodium beef broth
- 1½ lb (680 g) Yukon Gold or red potatoes, cut into ¾-inch cubes
- 1 cup (150 g) frozen green beans
- 1 cup (150 g) frozen corn (optional)
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried basil
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp kosher salt (plus more to taste)
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce

- 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

Optional Add-Ins

- ½ cup pearl barley or small pasta (add ½ cup extra broth)
- 1 tsp hot sauce or a pinch of red pepper flakes
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms, added with the onions
- 1 tbsp red wine vinegar, stirred in at the end

Equipment

- Large Dutch oven or heavy 8-quart pot
- Wooden spoon
- Chef’s knife and cutting board
- Ladle
- Colander (for draining fat, if needed)

Time & Intensity Breakdown

Stage	Time	Intensity	What's Happening
Prep vegetables	10 min	Low–Moderate	Dice onion, celery; slice carrots; cube potatoes
Brown the beef	7–8 min	Moderate	Sear until browned and crumbly
Sauté aromatics	5 min	Moderate	Soften onion, carrot, celery; bloom garlic
Build the base	3 min	Low	Tomato paste, tomatoes, broth, seasonings
Simmer	25–30 min	Low (passive)	Potatoes and carrots cook through
Add frozen vegetables	5 min	Low	Brighten and finish the soup
Season & rest	5 min	Low (passive)	Adjust salt; let flavors settle

Total active time: ~25 minutes | Total passive time: ~35 minutes

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Instructions

Step 1: Prep the Vegetables (10 minutes | Low–Moderate Intensity)

Dice the onion and celery into roughly uniform ½-inch pieces. Peel the carrots and slice them into ¼-inch rounds. Cut the potatoes into ¾-inch cubes — slightly smaller than the carrots so everything finishes cooking at the same time. Mince the garlic. Having everything prepped before you start cooking keeps the process smooth.

Step 2: Brown the Beef (7–8 minutes | Moderate Intensity)

Heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the ground beef and cook for 7–8 minutes, breaking it into small crumbles with a wooden spoon, until no pink remains and some edges are nicely browned. Let the beef sit undisturbed for a minute at a time so it develops a flavorful crust. If there's excess fat pooling, spoon most of it off, leaving about 1 tablespoon for flavor.

Step 3: Sauté the Aromatics (5 minutes | Moderate Intensity)

Reduce the heat to medium. Add the diced onion, carrots, and celery to the pot and cook, stirring occasionally, for 4–5 minutes, until softened and the onion is translucent. Add the minced garlic and cook 30 seconds, until fragrant — don't let it brown.

Step 4: Build the Base (3 minutes | Low Intensity)

Stir in the tomato paste, oregano, basil, and smoked paprika and cook 1 minute, stirring constantly, until the paste darkens slightly and the spices bloom. Pour in the diced tomatoes with juices, tomato sauce, beef broth, and Worcestershire sauce. Add the bay leaves, kosher salt, and black pepper. Stir to combine and bring to a gentle boil over medium-high heat, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot.

Step 5: Simmer (25–30 minutes | Low Intensity, Passive)

Add the cubed potatoes to the pot (add the barley or pasta now, if using, with ½ cup extra broth). Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer for 25–30 minutes, until the potatoes and carrots are fork-tender and the beef is fully cooked. Stir occasionally and skim any foam from the surface. Keep the pot at a lazy simmer — a hard boil can break down the potatoes.

Step 6: Add the Frozen Vegetables (5 minutes | Low Intensity)

Stir in the frozen green beans and corn (if using) and simmer uncovered for 3–5 minutes, just until heated through and bright green. They're already blanched, so they need only a brief

simmer.

Step 7: Season and Rest (5 minutes | Low Intensity, Passive)

Remove the bay leaves. Taste and adjust the salt and pepper. If using, stir in the red wine vinegar — the acid brightens the whole pot and sharpens the beefy depth. Let the soup rest off the heat for 5 minutes, then ladle into bowls and garnish with fresh parsley.

Flavor Variations

- Cheeseburger Soup: Stir in 1 cup shredded cheddar and ½ cup milk at the end for a creamy twist.
- Tex-Mex: Add a can of black beans, a can of corn, 1 tsp cumin, and a diced jalapeño; top with tortilla strips.
- Italian: Add 1 cup small pasta (such as ditalini) in the last 10 minutes and finish with fresh basil.
- Low-Carb: Omit the potatoes and add extra green beans and zucchini.
- Spicy: Add a pinch of red pepper flakes or a dash of hot sauce with the spices.

Serving Suggestions

Serve with crusty bread, cornbread, or oyster crackers. A sprinkle of shredded cheddar, a dollop of sour cream, or a few slices of avocado make excellent toppings. It’s a complete meal on its own, but a simple side salad rounds it out nicely.

Storage & Reheating

- Refrigerator: Cool completely, then store in an airtight container for up to 4 days. Flavors deepen overnight.
- Freezer: Freeze in portioned containers for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the fridge.
- Reheating: Warm gently on the stovetop over medium-low heat, adding broth or water if the soup has thickened (potatoes and pasta absorb liquid as they sit).

Nutrition Information (Per Serving, Based on 8 Servings)

Values are estimates and will vary by beef leanness, broth brand, and exact vegetable amounts.

Nutrient	Amount per Serving
Calories	~315 kcal
Total Fat	~12 g
— Saturated Fat	~4 g
Cholesterol	~55 mg
Sodium	~620 mg
Total Carbohydrates	~28 g
— Fiber	~5 g
— Sugars	~7 g
Protein	~23 g